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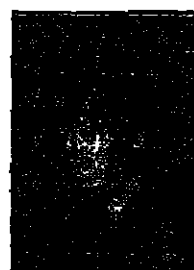
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AGENDA

Shahak may be next envoy to US

Another name has recently been added to the list of possible candidates being bandied about the State Department in Washington to replace Ambassador Eliyahu Ben-Elissar. Chief of Staff Lt. Gen. Amnon Lipkin-Shahak.

Rumors have reached the top floor of the building, adjacent to Secretary of State Madeleine Albright's offices, that the name of the outgoing chief of staff has been raised by the Prime Minister's Office as a suitable candidate for the position and a fitting temptation for Shahak in order to distance him from independent political activity in coming years.

The source claims that Shahak has already been approached unofficially by a senior official who has also reported the proposal to the Americans. This, despite the fact that the Prime Minister's Office still regards former ambassador Zalman Shoval and UN Ambassador Dore Gold as its leading candidates for the job.

It should be said that Shahak is held in high regard in Washington. He is considered to be thorough, does not make hasty decisions, and does his homework carefully before attending any meeting, regardless of whether it relates to military aspects of the political process, purchasing, or strategic coordination between Israel's defense establishment and that of the US.

If there is still uncertainty in Washington as to who the new ambassador will be, it would seem that on one subject views are unanimous: the incumbent ambassador is reaching the end of his term.

This is an embarrassing situation. Even Ben-Elissar's fiercest critics admit that he has never received the support of the prime minister, which could initially have assisted him in the difficult absorption process in the cruel US capital.

If a decision has indeed been made to recall the ambassador, it should be announced as soon as possible, putting an end to the rumors. If a decision has been made to leave him in Washington for an additional period, he then deserves the full support of the prime minister so that the gossip which is currently making it impossible for him to function can cease.

After Pessah

There was uncertainty in Washington this week as to whether peace coordinator Dennis Ross would return to the area after the Pessah break, as had previously been planned.

See AGENDA, Page 22



Ahmed Katamesh hugs his daughter Haneen on his return to Ramallah yesterday after spending over five years in prison. (AP)

Longest-serving detainee released

By STEVE RODAN and MOHAMMED NABIS

The IDF yesterday released a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine leader who had been held for more than five years in administrative detention. He was released after he signed a pledge that he would not be connected to violent activity against Israel.

Ahmed Katamesh, 45, from El Bireh, who was the longest-held administrative detainee, received an enthusiastic welcome from his family and supporters as he arrived home with his attorney Jawad Boulous.

Katamesh was arrested on

September 1, 1992, and transferred to administrative detention in October 1993.

"I'm sad regarding those who are still in jail because of the policy of administrative detention," he said. "Even during the racist regime in South Africa, there were arrests for only six months."

Palestinian sources said the release of Katamesh and his colleague, Hassan Fatafta, came as a result of efforts by the Palestinian Authority's Mahmoud Abbas (Abu Mazen). Boulous refused to confirm this.

"Katamesh has nothing to say in response to any reference to a deal,"

Boulous said. "He is just a prisoner who sought his freedom and it's high time that he was released."

For his part, Fatafta said he

refused to sign any agreement with Israel.

See RELEASED, Page 19

Two US congressmen: Iran has nuclear arms

By STEVE RODAN

Two US House members who have closely followed Tehran's military programs say Iran has obtained nuclear weapons as well as established a ballistic missile command and control system to launch them. They have called on the Clinton administration to draft a new policy that reflects

Tehran's capability.

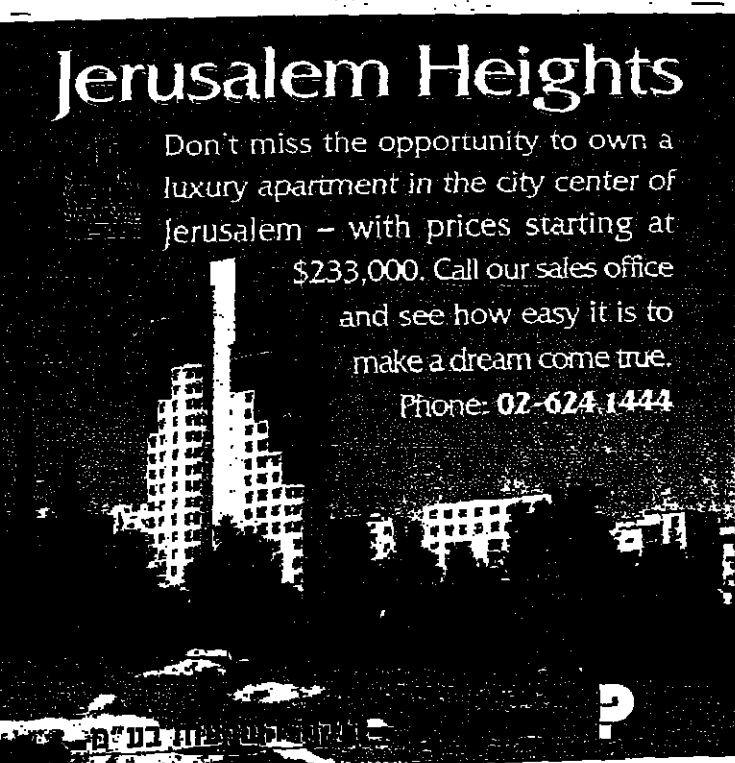
The assertion was the first by Congress members that deemed Iran as possessing nuclear weapons, in contrast to spokesmen of the Pentagon and State Department who maintain that Tehran has not achieved such capability.

See IRAN, Page 19

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NEWS

in brief

Albright calls Netanyahu in Eilat

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu interrupted his vacation in the Eilat area yesterday to answer a telephone call from US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright.

The conversation, which lasted nearly 20 minutes, dealt with the impending return of US peace envoy Dennis Ross and other subjects which were not disclosed by either of the parties.

Netanyahu was visiting the Hai-Bar reserve near Kibbutz Yotvata when the call came. He took it inside a communications van which accompanied him throughout the tour.

The State Department said that Ross plans to travel to the region next Friday. *Jay Bushinsky*

Mubarak calls on US to push peace process

President Hosni Mubarak yesterday called on the United States to release its own proposals for pushing forward the stalled Middle East peace process.

"I hope that they release the initiative immediately," Mubarak said after meeting with Syrian President Hafez Assad, who arrived in Cairo on an unannounced visit. The Clinton administration "is doing its best, but there are influences on it," Mubarak said.

In Jordan, King Hussein called the US proposal a step forward. "The American proposal did not reach the level that would meet our expectations, but in all it was a prod to the peace process and a big step towards attaining peace," Hussein said in a televised letter. *AP*

US defense secretary to visit

US Secretary of Defense William Cohen is to visit Israel on Monday during a Middle East tour. Defense Minister Yitzhak Mordechai will host Cohen at the ministry in Tel Aviv and is expected to push for a US commitment to widen the strategic cooperation between the two countries, defense sources said.

Mordechai also will lay out the IDF's long-term modernization plans and ask for a continued US commitment to maintaining Israel's qualitative edge in weaponry.

This will be the fifth time that Mordechai and Cohen will meet, but the first time that Cohen will be in Israel in his present position. He had been scheduled to visit Israel last December, but that tour was canceled for what the Americans said were "domestic reasons." *Artie O'Sullivan*

Bicyclist killed near Caesarea

A man riding a bicycle was killed near the Caesarea intersection when he was hit by a car yesterday morning. Police did not reveal his identity or details of the crash.

Seven people were injured when two cars collided head-on near Kibbutz Dovrat on the Afula-Kfar Tavor Road yesterday afternoon. One of the injured was reported to be in serious condition. Police said a car veered from its lane and crashed into an oncoming car. The police said it is investigating the circumstances of the accident. A tractor-driver, 27, was in critical condition and a 16-year-old boy in serious condition when their tractor overturned near Kedumim in the Ben Shimon Forest area yesterday. *Irini*

Germany warns soldiers of neo-Nazi dangers

The German army yesterday launched an exhibition to warn soldiers about the dangers of right-wing extremism, using a display of Nazi memorabilia and neo-Nazi propaganda.

In the wake of a spate of right-wing incidents among its rank and file, the army said it aimed to make German soldiers aware of the ways extremist groups prey on the young and the ignorant.

The exhibition will tour about 30 military bases in Germany up to May next year. Objects on display range from Nazi booty such as daggers, flags and badges, to modern-day neo-Nazi and right-wing propaganda pamphlets, T-shirts and Internet websites used by extremist groups. *Reuters*

Tudjman tells Bentsur:

Croatia asked for Sakic's extradition

By JAY BUSHINSKY

Croatian President Franjo Tudjman notified visiting Foreign Ministry Director-General Eytan Bentsur yesterday that he has asked for the extradition from Argentina of Dinko Sakic, the wartime commandant of the Jasenovac death camp.

Tudjman's move came 24 hours after the Yugoslav government submitted evidence of Sakic's alleged involvement in crimes against humanity to the Argentine authorities.

Of the estimated 500,000 persons who perished in Jasenovac, almost all were citizens of Yugoslavia, which then comprised Croatia as well, and 20,000 were Yugoslav Jews. The camp originally was used as a place of internment for members of the anti-Fascist and anti-Nazi resistance. Most of its victims were Serbs, but Croats and Gypsies also died there.

Bentsur welcomed Croatia's decision to request Sakic's extradition. Foreign Ministry spokesman Aviv Shir-On said.

The meeting was held at Tudjman's initiative. Shir-On went on, noting that he used the opportunity "to clarify his position and that of democratic Croatia which condemns the country's Ustashi-Fascist regime and especially the crimes it committed against the Jews." Bentsur was asked before his departure for Belgrade and Zagreb by the Simon Wiesenthal Center's director in Israel, Efraim Zuroff, to raise the Sakic case and to seek his extradition to Croatia.



Croatian President Franjo Tudjman (left) meets with Foreign Ministry Director-General Eytan Bentsur in Zagreb yesterday. *AP*

"We think there is great significance in there being a trial of an Ustashi leader in Croatia," Zuroff said. "It would contribute to the elucidation of the Croats' role in Nazi Germany's 'Final Solution of the Jewish Problem.'"

Reports from Buenos Aires indicate that an arrest warrant was issued by Argentina's justice ministry, but Sakic evidently has not yet been taken into custody.

Zuroff said he also urged Bentsur to discuss the contents

of Tudjman's book, the original edition of which reportedly contains references to the Holocaust that minimize its extent and consequences. Tudjman deleted these passages in subsequent editions.

Egypt, Syria: Israel must leave Lebanon without conditions

CAIRO (Reuters) - Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak and his Syrian counterpart Hafez Assad yesterday rejected Israel's conditions for a pullout from south Lebanon.

The two leaders told a news conference after lengthy talks in Cairo that Israel had to leave the southern strip it occupies without asking for anything in return, as stipulated in UN Security Council Resolution 425.

"They (Israel) entered Lebanon without permission so they can get out of Lebanon without permission," Mubarak said.

"If Israel is going to withdraw (from south Lebanon) in accordance with Resolution 425, I think no one will object. But neither Syria nor Lebanon will accept that it be negotiated," Assad added. "Israel has to just withdraw from Lebanon. The Israelis entered Lebanon so they can get out of it." Assad arrived in Cairo for the previously unannounced visit and went straight into a closed-door meeting with Mubarak.

He last visited Egypt in September and Mubarak paid a return visit to the Syrian capital in January.

Egyptian newspapers said yesterday that Lebanese Prime Minister Rafik Hariri is due to visit Egypt next week. Cairo has said it would back Lebanon's stance on the Israeli proposal to withdraw IDF troops from south Lebanon.

Jay Bushinsky adds: Prime Minister Binaymin Netanyahu's communications adviser David Bar-Ilan said Assad's visit to Egypt was "an effort to dissuade Lebanon from negotiating Israel's withdrawal."

He said we can point to the absurdity of Arab regimes resisting Israel's desire to withdraw from their territory."

Israel has lodged two complaints to the five-nation committee charged with monitoring the understandings reached after Operation Grapes of Wrath two years ago, the IDF spokesman said yesterday.

The first complaint was over Hizbullah firing on Tuesday at the village of Reban in which a Lebanese girl was wounded. The second was over Hizbullah firing, also on Tuesday, from inside Nabatiya at an IDF post.

PA arrests nine Islamist students

The Palestinian Police has arrested nine Islamist university students who took part in a Hamas rally in Gaza earlier this month, university sources said yesterday.

They said the students belonged to the "Islamic bloc" and also formed the student council of Gaza's Islamic University.

Palestinian police in Nabulus on Monday arrested 12 university students who took part in an anti-Israel rally last week.

The arrests were the latest in a crackdown that followed charges and counter-charges by Hamas and the PA over who killed Hamas bombmaker Muhi Sharif last month.

Hamas accused Hamas leaders of having taken part in demonstrations on campus in Gaza and called on the military wing of Hamas to launch attacks against Israel to avenge Sharif's death. Israel has denied any connection to the killing.

Meanwhile in Amman, a coalition of Jordanian political parties yesterday urged PA Chairman Yasser Arafat to end his crackdown on Hamas activists and free its detained leaders.

The 13-party coalition, which includes Muslim fundamentalists and leftists opposed to peace with Israel, warned that stifling Hamas would "lead to Palestinian in-fighting which will benefit only the Zionist enemy and its allies."

"We want the Palestinian self-rule authority against continuing its oppressive measures to liquidate national resistance movements," the parties told Arafat in a letter.

In another development, the PA yesterday lifted a temporary closure order on the Reuters bureau in Gaza.

The PA shut the bureau last Thursday and imposed restrictions on Gaza-based Reuters journalists after the news agency distributed a videotape from Hamas accusing

the PA of involvement in Sharif's murder.

PA Secretary-General Tayeb Abdel-Rahim said after meeting Reuters representatives: "After discussing the issue of the video and other Hamas statements which come from abroad, relations have returned to normal between the Palestinian Authority and Reuters."

"There are grounds for cooperation in favor of credibility and accuracy. Therefore, the Reuters office in Gaza has been reopened and the staff there have been allowed to resume work with all freedom in respect for freedom of the press."

In a statement from London, David Rogers, Reuters Editor for Europe, Middle East and Africa, said: "We are pleased that misunderstandings have been cleared up. We are satisfied we will now be able to report events from Gaza and the West Bank without any impediment." (News agencies)

Third Way wants pullback in populated areas

By LIAT COLLINS

The Third Way is unhappy about the delay in the second redeployment but does not want to make an ultimatum. The party platform calls for "peaceful separation from the Palestinians," and members are

reportedly concerned that the government is not heading in this direction.

Internal Security Minister and Third Way leader Avidor Kahalani is initiating a cabinet discussion on the issue. Meanwhile, a growing dispute

between the party and members of the Council of Jewish Communities in Judea, Samaria and Gaza over what areas should be handed to the Palestinians made a big splash in the media yesterday.

Beit El council head Uri Ariel has warned the Third Way in a letter that its stand of handing over to the Palestinians areas next to Jewish settlements but not unpopulated areas and the Judean Desert will be responsible for bloodshed if it is accepted.

Ariel said the Third Way stand on the redeployment also harms the party's raison d'être - against withdrawal from the Golan Heights. He said a protest is planned on Tuesday outside the Prime Minister's Office during the scheduled visit by US special envoy Dennis Ross.

Third Way whip Yehuda Harel said in response that "anyone who decides to be active in fateful, historic decisions is taking on a heavy responsibility, but there is no choice."

He said the party would not make an ultimatum or set a deadline, "because that would help the other side." Third Way MK Alex Lubotzky said the changes wrought by the Oslo Accords by creating Palestinian autonomous areas means small Jewish communities next to major concentrations of Arabs, such as the settlements next to Jenin, should be handed over to the Palestinians to further the separation, while open and uninhabited areas should remain under IDF control to leave Israel the largest possible territory.

Council head Aharon Domb said this approach would place scores of communities at the same sort of risk as Netzarim and Kfar Darom in Gaza.

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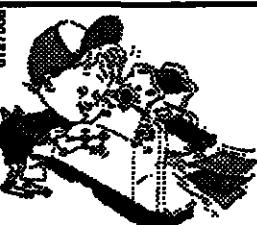
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Final witness to testify in US teen hearing

The final defense witness will testify next month on behalf of a teenage Maryland murder suspect fighting extradition to the United States, his lawyer said yesterday.

The 17-year-old suspect is charged in Montgomery County, Maryland, in the slaying of 19-year-old Alfred Tello Jr.

He has claimed Israeli citizenship, on the basis of his father being an Israeli, to keep from being renounced to the United States for trial.

The youth's attorney, former justice minister David Liba'i, said the final witness in his extradition hearing will testify May 3 in Jerusalem District Court.

The witness will be an Israeli man who lived near the youth's family in Tel Aviv 50 years ago, Liba'i said. He said the man would testify that when the family left Israel for the United States, they left their furniture in their apartment and said they intended to return.

The family kept the Tel Aviv apartment for two more years, Liba'i said.

Meanwhile, in Maryland Tuesday a prosecutor tried to convince Montgomery County Circuit Court Judge Paul H. Weinstein to throw out a statement allegedly made by the youth.

According to Assistant State's Attorney James Trusty, the teenager called his brother five days after the killing. *The Washington Post* reported. He told his brother that he and a second teenager were talking with Tello in a parked car when he showed some money and Tello pointed a shotgun at him. The second youth began punching Tello and, during a struggle over the shotgun, he said he found a phone cord in the car's back seat and strangled Tello.

The judge postponed a ruling until at least today.

The second teenager goes on trial next week in Maryland for the slaying. (AP)



Stopping to smell the flowers

A girl checks out the flowers on display at the flower show at Kfar Hamaccabiah yesterday.

(Yael Somekh/Israel Sun)

Swiss: Mossad brought tools in diplomatic bag

BERN — Mossad agents used a diplomatic bag to bring espionage tools into Switzerland for a failed wiretapping operation in February, Swiss Federal Prosecutor Carla del Ponte said yesterday.

The Mossad agent detained after the incident in the Swiss capital was caught with the bag in his possession of the bag, she said.

The agent will remain in custody until further notice while a federal examining magistrate continues the investigation, said Del Ponte.

The defendant was one of five Mossad agents caught trying to bug a small suburban apartment block, Swiss officials said. The other four were released after several hours of questioning by police.

"The defendant has admitted to some of the charges against him," said a statement from Del Ponte's office.

Del Ponte didn't confirm who the target of the Mossad operation was, but said that person hadn't denied "sympathies with certain organiza-

tions."

Last month, a Lebanese-born Swiss citizen thought to have been the target denied he has any links with the Hizbullah organization.

Investigations showed that three Mossad agents, including the one still detained, made a visit to the

apartment block in January using a duplicate key they had made, said the prosecutor's office.

Six people were involved in the February operation, the statement confirmed. In a Bern restaurant, the five who actually carried out the operation received the tools from a

person known only as the "sixth man."

Jay Bushinsky adds:

Foreign Ministry Spokesman Aviv Shir-On said Israel's missions in Bern and Geneva "had nothing to do with this affair."

(AP)

Jordan River boating site closed after fatal accident

By DAVID RUDGE

The Upper Galilee Regional Council has ordered a temporary cessation of boating activities on the stretch of the Jordan River where nine-year-old Ishai Scop from Netanya drowned on Tuesday and his mother was injured.

The operators of the site, Rafting Nahar Hayarden, said that despite their deep sorrow over the tragedy, there is no justification for stopping boating.

In an announcement issued to the media and broadcast on Israel Radio, the management noted that the company began rafting activities on the Jordan River 10 years ago. Over those years an experienced and professional team of instructors had been built up which acted in accordance with the safety regulations laid down by the regional council and the company, it said.

Hundreds of people were at the site yesterday and boating activities went ahead as usual. Visitors said they had been given proper instructions and guidance.

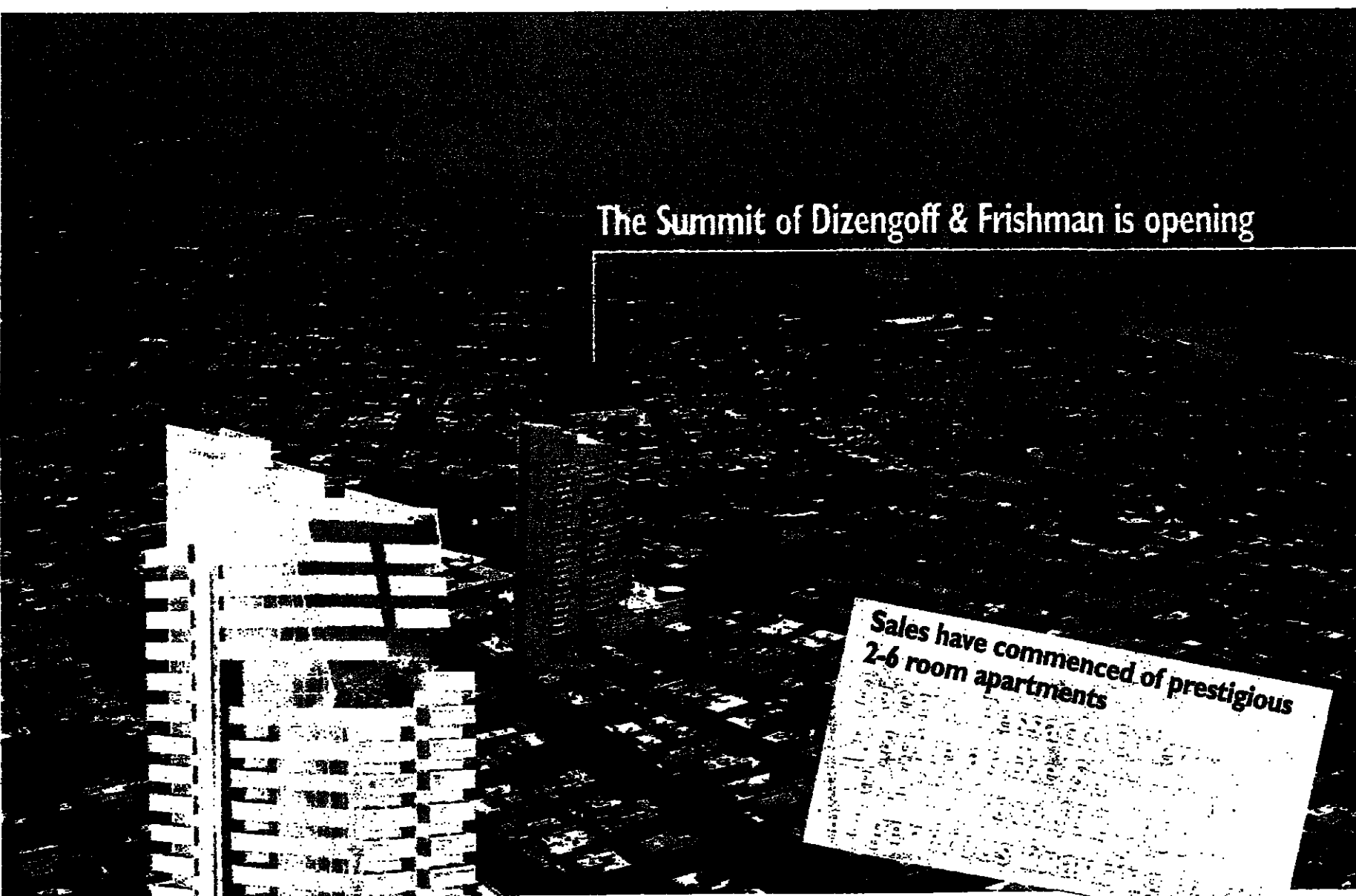
Nevertheless, Upper Galilee Regional Council head Aharon Valenci said the council was issuing a temporary cessation order, under municipal by-laws.

"The company was informed verbally on the same day as the tragedy and we have since sent them a letter to cease boating activities," said Valenci. "It's quite possible that the permits are in order and that everything was done in accordance with regulations and safety precautions, but something happened that has to be examined — and until that is done we feel the rafting activities should cease," he said.

Meanwhile, Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani yesterday praised the efforts of the country's six Civil Guard voluntary rescue units all year round, but particularly during the Pessah vacation.

He told members of the units — Golan Heights, Western Galilee, Ein Gedi, Central Arava, Har Hanegev, and Megillot — he would do everything possible to help them meet their needs. He also called on hikers not to take chances and to follow instructions.

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NEWS

in brief

Police question Hussein

Jerusalem Police questioned Faisal Hussein, the Palestinian Authority minister responsible for Jerusalem affairs, yesterday after they arrested an Orient House guard with a fake ID and a weapon belonging to Hussein. Jarouf Majad told police that he had gotten the weapon from Hussein's home in Jericho. Hussein told the Jerusalem police's minority unit that the PA security forces do not operate in Jerusalem. Hussein also told police that he has received a number of death threats recently. *Tim*

Jordan, Israel agree on terminal at joint airport

Jordan has accepted an Israeli proposal to build a terminal for the joint airport the two countries are running at the Gulf of Akaba. Israeli Embassy spokesman Roey Gilad said yesterday the terminal would be built on the Israeli side of the border, which is 500 meters from the runway of Jordan's Akaba International Airport. Gilad said the new terminal is expected to cost \$10 million. Israel will finance it, but Jordan will pay for the building of a road between the two terminals. *AP*

US representatives slam Cook

Fourteen members of the US House of Representatives wrote British Prime Minister Tony Blair on Tuesday to lambast his foreign secretary Robin Cook for creating a controversy during last month's visit to Israel and to urge Blair to play a more positive role when he visits in May. Cook's controversial stop at Har Homa was one of his "poor political calculations" that set the peace process back and "inflicted severe damage" on Israel's relations with the EU, the letter stated. Far from advancing its position in the peace process, Cook's fumbles "only bolster the belief that the EU is biased toward Palestinian interests," it added. The representatives went on to express hope that when Blair visits Israel, he "will use the opportunity to enhance relations between the EU and Israel and to commit Great Britain to a supportive and fair role in the Middle East." *Hillel Kuttler*

Bentsur to visit Cyprus

Foreign Ministry Director-General Eytan Bentsur is expected to visit Cyprus on April 24. During the visit he will exchange views and information with his counterpart in Nicosia, Alecos Shampos. Ambassador Euripedes Evriviades, who will be in the Cypriot capital during Bentsur's one-day stay, welcomed the director-general's recent comments in favor of his government's call for the demilitarization of the divided island. Evriviades said that under such circumstances there will be no need for the Russian S-300 surface-to-air missiles which Nicosia has ordered "because Turkish warplanes constantly intrude on our air space and intimidate our citizens by deliberately flying low overhead." *Jay Bushinsky*

Court extends Lebanese man's remand

The Lod Military Appeals Court yesterday extended the remand of Ali Ahmed Banjek of Lebanon by six days, after he was first acquitted earlier in the week of charges including membership in Hizbullah and firing Katyusha rockets into Israel. The military prosecutor appealed Banjek's acquittal, arguing that the judges did not give enough weight to the evidence against him. In issuing the remand order, the court suspended a deportation order against Banjek pending the outcome of the April 21 appeal. Banjek had testified he was kidnapped in August 1996 by South Lebanese Army soldiers and Israeli security agents and underwent torture, even though he supports peace. *Tim*

'All options open' in pipeline probe

By LIAT COLLINS

Police investigating the sabotage of the Mekorot pipeline in the Negev on Tuesday say all options are being considered and that nationalistic motives have not been ruled out.

The sabotage left thousands of residents, farmers, tourists, and soldiers in the desert without running water for some 15 hours in the middle of a heat wave, while 15,000 cubic meters of water went to waste.

Agriculture Ministry Director-General Dan Kritchman estimated that the damage cost between \$3 million and \$5m. Though some of the damage in vegetable and grain fields and fruit orchards was a result of the heat wave, he said, the deaths of thousands of chickens and other livestock was due solely to the sabotage.

"A plan must be prepared for emergency situations in which the water supply system is damaged in order to prevent damages such as those which farmers in the Negev

incurred yesterday as a result of the sabotage of the main pipeline of Mekorot," he said.

Mekorot water company director Doron Grupper said yesterday there are between 15 and 20 acts of sabotage a month on Mekorot property in the South. He stopped short of accusing any particular group and just noted this was unparalleled elsewhere in the country.

Ramat Hanegev Local Council head Shmuel Riffman was criticized yesterday by civil rights

groups and Arab MKs for placing the blame on Beduin extremists. The Association for Civil Rights in Israel accused Riffman of repeatedly discriminating against Beduin. ACRI said Riffman should let the police solve the crime and that he should concentrate on fulfilling his role as local council head by serving all of the residents of Ramat Hanegev, whatever their background.

Internal Security Minister Avigdor Kahalani, who toured the South yesterday, said the incident

was "most serious but there is a need to act with restraint before accusing somebody."

Southern District police spokesman Dep.-Cmdr. Shalom Ben-Hamo said the police still are gathering evidence.

"The official police stand is that we have not yet determined the background to the incident. But we can definitely say that this... is the most serious incident of this type we have had to deal with," Ben-Hamo said.

Tim contributed to this report.

Bid to let Amigur residents buy apartments

By ARYEH DEAN COHEN

Former Ashdod mayor Aryeh Azulai, a member of the Jewish Agency and the Zionist Executive, has launched a bid to convince the agency to allow residents of some 30,000 Amigur apartments owned by the agency to buy their homes at reasonable rates.

In a letter sent to Jewish Agency chairman Avraham Burg before Pessah, Azulai asked that in the nation's jubilee year, the residents - many of them immigrants who came here in the 1950s and 1960s - be allowed to buy the apartments, which he said were originally purchased with money contributed by world Jewry.

Azulai asks that the apartments be made available to the residents at a reasonable price and with an offer of affordable mortgages, perhaps even deducting rent paid by the residents over the years.

"It is only fitting that the Jewish Agency complete the absorption of the immigrants from the early days of the state and finally put these apartments at the disposal of the residents and their families. The Jewish Agency can serve as an example for the government, which is delaying acting regarding residents of Amidar apartments it owns," he wrote.

Amigur apartments are located in Ofakim, Netivot, Sderot, Ashkelon, Ashdod, Migdal Ha'emek, and the Haifa bay-side suburbs.

Some of the residents were able to purchase their apartments in a previous offer by Amigur, but the poorer residents were unable to do so and are not allowed to pass on the rights to rent such apartments to their children who grew up in them, Azulai said.



America celebrates Israel's 50th

Michael Douglas sits with members of the Stephen S. Wise Elementary School Choir yesterday during the airing of 'To Life! America Celebrates Israel's 50th,' Hollywood's anniversary tribute to the Jewish state. It came close to resurrecting the old MGM motto, 'more stars than there are in heaven.' A cast of 21 headliners, backed by hundreds of dancers, singers, and musicians, put on a program that deftly mixed a variety show with historical reminiscences, and American comedy with Israeli songs and dances. Douglas, Kevin Costner, and Miki Avital cohosted the program. *(Text: Tom Tugend; photo: Reuters)*

Conversion board to meet in two weeks

By HAIM SHAPIRO

The first meeting of the board of the joint conversion institute is to take place on April 28. The government failed in its attempt to convene the body on Sunday, a day before the High Court of Justice is due to receive the government's reply as to why two infants, converted by the Conservative movement at Kibbutz Hanaton in 1995, should not be registered as Jews.

Rabbi Reuven Hammer, the Conservative movement's member on the institute board, described the setting up of the board as a wonderful joint effort by the government, which had sponsored few such joint efforts. But, he added, this did not mean that the recommendations of the Neeman Committee were being implemented.

"Until the Chief Rabbinate changes its stance, the recommendations discussed by the Neeman Committee cannot be met and we are not fulfilling our part either. We have notified the people involved that this does not commit us to stop our lawsuits or to stop our conversions," Hammer said.

Rabbi Uri Regev, director of the Reform movement's Israel Religious Action Center, said yesterday that on Sunday the IRAC is to present its summation to the Jerusalem District Court concerning 19 cases of converts who wish to be registered as Jews. The cases, which were unified by a ruling of the Supreme Court, include both individuals who were converted to Judaism by non-Orthodox rabbis in Israel and those who studied in Israel, but were formally converted abroad.

All those involved previously had been registered as non-Jews, he said, explaining that the district court deals with changes of registration.

On the eighth anniversary
of the tragic death of our beloved
Capt. ILAN KAUFMAN

who fell in the line of duty,
a memorial service will be held on Friday, April 24,
at 12 noon, at the Savoyon Cemetery.

The Family and Friends

With great sorrow we announce the death of

IRVING KATZ

The funeral took place on Tuesday, April 14.

Shiva from Motza'el Shabbat, April 18,
through Wednesday, April 22,
at the home of Allan Katz, 8 Rehov Ron, Hadera.

The Bereaved Family

With great sorrow, we announce the passing of
NORMAN SHULEWITZ

in Omaha, Nebraska.
Mourning by his Wife: Anne
Sons: Martin and Alan
Brother: Yehuda
Sisters: Diane and Belle
Shiva from Sunday, April 19 at 26a Noyot, Jerusalem.
Shaharit at 6:30 a.m.; Mincha at 7:00 p.m.

Two babies overdose on paracetamol

By JUDY SEGEL

Two babies were given overdoses of paracetamol by their parents over the past two days. One child, a two-year-old boy, recovered, while the other, an 18-month-old girl, is in serious condition and may need a liver transplant.

Dr. Tommy Schonfeld, head of the intensive care unit at Schneider Children's Medical Center for Israel, noted yesterday that the pain-relieving and fever-reducing drug is an over-the-counter medication marketed in several brands of tasty syrup or suppositories.

The girl victim, who had persistent high fever due to a virus, was given two rectal suppositories of 250 milligrams each within four hours, when the proper dose was one 150-mg. dose. She was brought to the hospital in a state of lethargy after the 24-hour period when an antidote can counter the effect. Schonfeld said the boy, who had a bacterial infection, was given a large dose as well, but he received treatment in time and recovered.

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- Advice for Investment in Malta

The Maltese companies will be in Israel between the 26th and 27th April, 1998 and will be looking to meet Israeli companies interested in: Joint Ventures, Franchising Arrangements, Co-Production and/or Sub-Contracting, Transfers of Technology, Reciprocal Marketing Arrangements, and various other strategic alliances and partnerships.

Interested Israeli companies are cordially invited to meet the representatives of the Maltese companies. Private one-to-one meetings can be arranged by contacting Ms. Iris Gamaro in Tel Aviv on Tel: (03) 6473350 / (051) 246938 or Fax: (03) 6295189. The meetings will be held at the Dan Panorama Hotel, Tel Aviv.

For more information please contact:

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Tel Aviv, Israel

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This event is organized by the Malta External Trade Corporation (METCO), in conjunction with the Euro Info Correspondence Centre (EICC), and with the support of the Israel Export Institute, the Federation of Israeli Chambers of Commerce, the Manufacturers Association of Israel and Bank of Valetta (Malta).

ברוך דיין האמת
In deep sorrow, we announce the death of a very dear, gracious and
righteous lady

BERTHA PLUZNICK

Daughter of Reb Mordechai Halpern ז"ל

The funeral will take place today, Thursday, April 16, 1998
(20 Nissan 5758) at 11 a.m., at Kiryat Shaul Cemetery, Tel Aviv.
Shiva at the Jacobson residence, 3 Rehov Alumim, Afeka, Tel Aviv.

Mourners:

Husband: Israel (Isi) Pluznik

Daughter: Adele Genachowski and Family, New York

Daughter: Evelyn Jacobson and Family
and all the family

מקראות

Supporting acts

The rumble and the shouting dies. The captains and the kings depart. The analysts and columnists and diplomats remain.

They pick through the crumbs and try to tell their masters - CEOs, readers, foreign ministers - what just happened and what it means.

The story of the week was the Mitchell peace accord for Ireland. Haven't we been here before? Camp David accords, Oslo accords, Dayton accords - assuredly a cord enough to hang oneself, and agreement enough to bring the most disagreeable people onto the streets.

Before getting too world-weary, it is worth noting that Camp David and Dayton are actually working, and the announcement of Oslo's death continues to be highly exaggerated. The Irish agreement is a new-born babe, but it looks like a healthy one.

Rev. Ian Paisley, the loud-mouth, foulmouth of Northern Ireland politics on the extreme Unionist fringe, may not be paraded before a coffin of Tony Blair or a picture of Gerry Adams in Nazi uniform, but he kept us entertained during the Friday night vigil as Mitchell's midnight deadline moved into the small hours.

Paisley pattern
At an impromptu news conference outside the Stormont conference he was boycotting, Paisley amused bored journalists in need of action with a fine performance of the Bible-thumping oratory that makes him a pleasure

to listen to - so long as one cannot hear the words of hatred, bigotry, racism and intolerance that the fine Ulster cadences cover.

While proclaiming that there would be no traitorous shout to the Sinn Féin terrorists, he contradicted his thesis by condemning as treason the accords he said would never exist and vowed to see them smashed.

Every good play needs its stars, but would never work without supporting cast. They are the noises off, "rhubarb-rhubarb," "traitor," the comic relief, the wailing wiles and moaning minnies that will Shakespeare used so brilliantly to hold the mirror up to nature. That does not disguise the fact that they sometimes can be murderous, or that their impassioned hyperactivity cannot overthrow the quiet prostration of the well-intentioned.

Ian Paisley is the Cassandra wailing outside Ireland's window of opportunity. It is worth recalling with a shudder that Cassandra was condemned always to be right, but never to be believed.

Hushed point
Northern Ireland has often rivalled Bosnia or Somalia as the subject of the most worthy but most boring story of the day. In the early days of the Stormont talks that led to the peace agreement last weekend, a journalist told a negotiator it was like watching paint dry.

See ACTS, Page 22

Column One



Thomas O'Dwyer

Yeltsin threatens early election

Showdown between president and parliament due tomorrow

By MARTIN NESIRKY

MOSCOW (Reuters) - Russia's opposition-dominated lower house of parliament struck a defiant pose yesterday in its stand-off with President Boris Yeltsin over who should be the country's next prime minister.

The showdown between Yeltsin and parliament is to be decided, one way or another, in a vote tomorrow, which follows last Friday's rejection by the lawmakers of Yeltsin's candidate, Sergei Kiriyenko.

A Kremlin adviser issued an indirect warning to the State Duma, giving possible dates for a new parliamentary election if the president disbands the chamber for failing to back Kiriyenko.

Duma deputies earlier voted almost unanimously to ask the Constitutional Court to rule whether the president has the right to put forward the same prime ministerial candidate three times.

They also agreed to consider an open rather than secret vote on Kiriyenko during tomorrow's second ballot, a pro-

cedure which would make it harder for opposition deputies to break with an anti-Kiriyenko party line.

Despite the political pressures, Russian shares rose on a flurry of speculative buying.

"The market is focusing on expectations, not events," said one trader at a Western firm. "People now expect Kiriyenko to get through, so they're buying." In London, palladium prices fell from 18-year highs on news from Russia's State Precious Metals Reserve, Gokhran, that Kiriyenko had signed an order setting out export quotas of all platinum group metals. Russia dominates this world market.

As the markets moved, the Duma dug in its heels. Many in the Duma consider Kiriyenko, a 35-year-old former banker and energy minister, inexperienced and want the president to come up with a different nominee. Yeltsin sacked the last government in March.

The 67-year-old Kremlin chief has steadfastly stuck to his man, arguing he has the constitution on his side and no one else in mind for the job of injecting fresh impetus into reforms.

One judge, Vladimir Strekozov, told Reuters it would take the Constitutional Court at least two months to consider a Duma appeal on Yeltsin's right. A Kremlin adviser said court deliberations would not hold up Duma voting.

Friday's hearing is expected to follow much the same format as the first - an address by Kiriyenko, questions and answers, speeches by party leaders, and a summing up by the nominee.

But the Duma yesterday added a twist by agreeing to consider an open ballot. Last week's vote was closer than expected, when many deputies used the secrecy of an anonymous electronic vote to dodge party discipline.

"If the leaders want to stick to their tough position, they will try to push through an open vote," deputy Duma speaker Alexander Shokhin told reporters. "If they decide it is necessary to let Kiriyenko through, then the question of an open vote will be put and rejected."

Under the constitution, Yeltsin must automatically disband the Duma if it rejects his candidate or candidates three times.

Havel said in 'excellent' condition

By ROLF SODERLUND

INNSBRUCK, Austria (Reuters) - Czech President Vaclav Havel was in "surprisingly good condition" yesterday after emergency surgery in Austria to remove part of his intestine, but his surgeon warned that complications could still arise.

Innsbruck University Hospital's chief surgeon, Prof. Ernst Bodner, disclosed that he had removed a length of Havel's intestine around 30-centimeters long during a three and a half hour operation on Tuesday.

"The organs are functioning perfectly, but the illness is of such a nature that serious complications are possible within days," Bodner told reporters. "I had to remove about 30 cm. of his gut, his large intestine." However, Prof. Norbert Mutz, head of the hospi-

tal's intensive care unit, was much more upbeat about the prognosis for the former anti-communist dissident, who was taken ill while on holiday in Austria with his second wife Dagmar.

"I spoke to the president for 45 minutes this morning. His condition is excellent now," Mutz said. "He feels fine. He is already reading. He is in surprisingly good condition."

Dagmar Havel said she had given the president paracetamol to try to bring down his temperature after he fell ill on Sunday.

He complained of stomach pains which gradually worsened. She feared he might have appendicitis and summoned medical help.

"It was a well-deserved holiday, and we had looked forward to it. But fate decreed otherwise," she said.

Havel married Dagmar Veskmova, an actress, in January 1997, less than a year after the death from cancer of Olga, his wife of 32 years.

Russian President Boris Yeltsin sent a get-well message to Havel yesterday. It said: "I am glad that the operation was successful. I want to give you my sincere moral support and wish you a quick recovery and return to active state work."

The Czech president also received messages from U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright and Austrian Chancellor Viktor Klima. He spoke by telephone to Austrian President Thomas Klestil as well as Czech politicians.

Havel has struggled to recover from a lung cancer operation in December 1996. He nearly died of pneumonia and other complications after the 1996 surgery.

Botha goes on trial

By JULIETTE SAUNDERS

GEORGE, South Africa (Reuters) - A defiant former president P.W. Botha went on trial yesterday for refusing to appear before South Africa's truth commission investigating abuses during the apartheid era.

Botha, 82, known and feared as the "Great Crocodile" during his years in power, told reporters before entering the court: "Even if they destroy me, they cannot destroy my soul and my convictions."

Following the failure of talks to spare him the embarrassing court appearance, he said he would remain defiant and was determined to see the case through, despite having to bear most of the legal costs.

Botha was in court for ignoring a subpoena to appear before the

statutory Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), investigating human rights abuses committed by all sides during apartheid.

The case against Botha started after his lawyers and TRC officials failed to agree on terms by which he could have testified to the commission in a closed session.

Initial testimony was from TRC executive secretary Paul van Zyl concerning legal details on the issuing of the subpoena against Botha.

TRC chairman Archbishop Desmond Tutu told reporters before the case began that Botha had wanted to give evidence in a one-on-one session with him.

"I have spoken to him. He is adamant and he is ready to speak only to me. Fundamentally for Mr. Botha, it stuck in his gullet to appear before the commission at all," Tutu said.

THE PRIME MINISTER'S JUBILEE BUSINESS SUMMIT

FOREIGN INVESTOR JUBILEE AWARD

An international economic conference - the Prime Minister's Business Summit - will be held in Jerusalem from Tuesday evening, October 13 to Thursday October 15, 1998. Participants will include leaders of the international business community, Israeli and foreign ministers, officials and leading figures in the Israeli economy.

The "Foreign Investor Jubilee Award" will be presented at the conference to fifty international investors who have demonstrated their confidence in the State and its economy and whose investments have helped to advance the business sector, strengthen the economy and contribute towards Israel's economic independence.

This list of investors will contain names submitted to the public committee and representatives of the Prime Minister's Office.

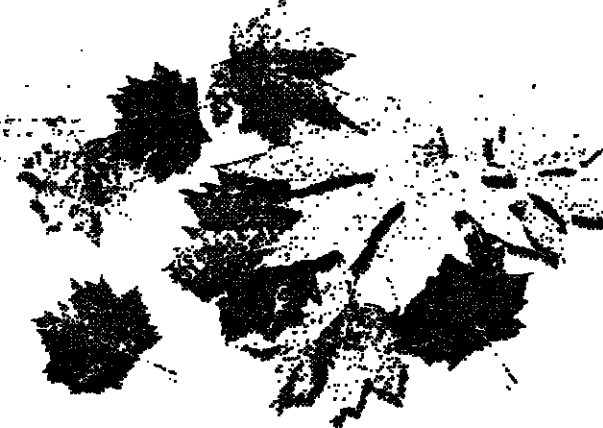
The award will be presented to each recipient personally at a special festive ceremony. The Prime Minister will forward invitations to them through the Israeli ambassadors.

If you have information on foreign investors who have invested directly in the Israeli business sector in excess of fifty million dollars (at present value), or the value of their investment today exceeds 100 million dollars or who have made a special contribution towards the advancement of Israel's economy, please inform us by April 30, 1998.

We would like to thank all those who help us to ensure that anyone deserving the State's special appreciation in its Jubilee year is not overlooked.

Address for transmission of information: Jubilee Conference Headquarters, Room 1019, Industry House, 29 Rehov Hamar, Tel Aviv, P.O. Box 50481, Fax 03-562-7407, or telephone 03-562-2771

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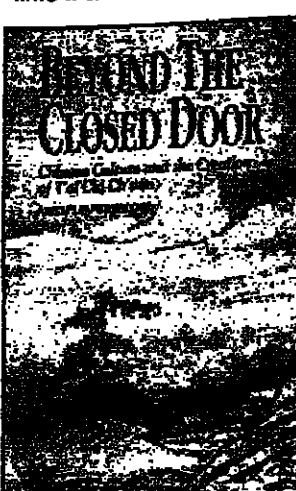
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have life way beyond the interest in her death," said Russ Pacek, publisher of the report. "Coverage of Diana is going to become bigger than Elvis, bigger than Marilyn Monroe."

There were also 80 different stories on the paparazzi involvement in Diana's life and death, 60 stories on entertainment tributes to Diana and 45 segments on how her princes will cope.

Some newsmagazines found anything about Diana worth



Belfast is certainly no Oslo

There is no similarity between the Oslo Agreement, signed in 1993 between Israel and the Palestinians, and the Belfast Agreement reached in 1998 between the Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland.

Equally, there is no resemblance between the bridging proposal that the Americans suggested to us just before the establishment of the state, proposing a cease-fire that would have delayed the proclamation of the Jewish state, and the American bridging proposal which might accelerate the formation of a Palestinian state.

(The only thing these two proposals have in common is the name of the official in charge of mediation: Ross. Fifty years ago it was John Ross, today Dennis Ross.)

It's true that President Clinton,

The Belfast Agreement can't serve as a model for a solution to the conflict between us and the Palestinians

King Hussein and other statesmen have proposed exploiting the momentum of the American success in Ireland as a lever for American mediation in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. But the Belfast Agreement, apart from radiating optimism and increasing confidence in America's diplomatic ability, can't serve as a model for a solution to the conflict between us and the Palestinians.

This is not only because of the different nature of the conflicts, but chiefly because there were no unwanted mediators interfering with America's endeavors during the Irish negotiations. The European Union wasn't trying to gain mediator status as it is in the Middle East - even though the Irish conflict is set in Europe, and concerns two EU member states.

This isn't the only difference between the two conflicts: in London there were no demonstrations against the government when it shelved talks with Sinn Féin. The British government said the talks would only resume when Irish extremists ended their terrorist activities in London and Londonderry and this reflected the British national consensus of no negotiations under terrorist pressure. This steadfast stance helped the British reach an agreement guaranteeing the integrity of the United Kingdom, including Ulster (Northern Ireland).

The negotiations towards the settlement of the conflict in Northern Ireland were held quietly, with no thunder and lightning from the UN General Assembly or Security Council. UN discussions generally foster illusions for one or other party in the conflict, as if a UN resolution in its favor absolves it from seeking compromise. UN discussions are also liable to encourage one side in the mistaken belief that it no longer needs either direct negotiations or mediation to

achieve its ends. Indeed, the many discussions in the UN on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict have actually served to increase the duration of the conflict.

WE welcome the settlement of any conflict which is likely to prevent or reduce bloodshed in the world. The Belfast Agreement deserves praise, even credit in that it might be the beginning of the end of the long-lasting blood-rid-

MOSHE ZAK

Palestinian conflict, we can say that the Belfast agreement consists of a "functional compromise" rather than a "territorial compromise." In other words, Britain retains total sovereignty over all Ulster, but has created a shaky connection with Eire in order to achieve peace between the two parties in Ulster.

The British, who have been preaching to us that Israel shouldn't take a pedantic stand on the removal of clauses from the Palestinian covenant, will certainly rigidly insist that the Dublin parliament makes an unambiguous decision to fulfill its commitment.

Dennis Ross, who arrives in Jerusalem next week, can't reproduce the tactics of mediator John Mitchell. His mission is more complicated, and his working con-

his great patience and diplomatic professionalism, he is portrayed in the media as if his mission is on the brink of collapse. This is grossly unfair. If Ross were allowed to carry on in peace, and if so many others didn't interfere in his mediation, he could achieve something no less impressive than Mitchell did in Ireland.

Ross has no choice but to deal with the percentage of the withdrawal, even though deep in his

Middle Israel

AMOTZ ASA-EL

Two years later

Even the staunchly anti-revolutionary Edmund Burke conceded, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, that "a state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation."

Yet in the land of milk and honey a host of change-averse academics, politicians, and journalists are still seeking to restore the manifestly defunct system whereby anonymous, sectarian, spoils-thirsty party caucuses imposed on us inept leadership.

In reality, however, the rapidly maturing performances of both Binyamin Netanyahu and Ehud Barak indicate that, two years after its launch, our remodeled premiership is beginning to deliver the kind of public alertness,

essarily to everyone's liking, but then none of it does not coincide with Netanyahu's campaign promises. If anything, though not too late, it's too little.

Similarly, Netanyahu's treatment of the peace process is more or less what his voters could have expected, i.e. recognizing the Palestinian Authority but dealing with it less warmly than Labor did. Whether or not this approach is prudent will become apparent in the remainder of the current political cycle, and in all likelihood play an important role in the next election; but the system, by the same token that it motivates the prime minister to do things, also allows him to do things his way, as indeed it was meant to.

The rapidly maturing performances of both Netanyahu and Barak indicate that directly elected leaders are better programmed to deliver the kind of public alertness, national sensitivity, and policy commitment their predecessors so frequently lacked

national sensitivity, and policy commitment which their predecessors so often lacked.

To be sure, on either side of the political divide most would agree that Netanyahu's initial performance verged on the catastrophic.

The nonchalance with which he assumed office, scathingly devoid of operational policy plans; the frivolity with which he sanctioned a scandalous appointment like Roni Bar-On's; the apathy with which he subcontracted many of his most delicate duties to a thug like Avigdor Lieberman; and the ease with which he trumpeted hollow promises, from making cabinet members forfeit their Knesset seats, to selling 100 state-owned companies within 100 days, all gave ample reason to suspect that, a century after its inception, the Zionist enterprise had fallen in the lap of a charlatan.

Meanwhile, sensing the gathering alarm over his conduct, Netanyahu's many opponents repeatedly came close to unseating him, whether after his questioning by police over the Bar-On Affair, or in the heat of the Likud's contentious party convention last fall, or in the aftermath of David Levy's thunderous resignation in the winter.

Since then, however, even his many local and foreign detractors have realized that manipulating a directly-elected premier is much harder than it was with his Knesset-elected predecessors. The successive resignations of three ministers have not only failed to dent his sway but even enhanced it. In this much more stable structure, the premier's dependence on Knesset votes is not nearly what it was under the previous system.

YET much more tellingly, the prime minister has learned that under the new system he is held personally accountable for his cabinet's failure to generate change. The result is a rapid maturity process.

From searching for a way out of Lebanon and seeking faster trains to launching a convertible shekel, selling Bank Hapoalim, imposing competition on Egged, and now offering a 49 percent stake in the Electric Corporation on the Tel Aviv Stock Exchange, Netanyahu is clearly sweating in an effort to better our lives.

Surely, the extent to which he is successful in tackling such challenges has yet to be gauged, but the thought that in less than two years on the job he has already done more on these fronts than Yitzhak Shamir had during an aggregate seven years at this country's helm is mind-boggling.

Shamir, throughout his famously lethargic years in office, used to go home every afternoon and take a good snooze. The directly-elected premier cannot allow himself that kind of luxury - and neither can this country.

Obviously, in its content this gathering hyperactivity is not nec-

NOW Netanyahu's rapidly improving record on policy commitment has also been surprisingly matched by a hitherto take-no-stand Ehud Barak.

In adopting a clear stance favoring an end to haredi draft-dodging, the opposition leader has crossed a Rubicon in which all his predecessors wouldn't even dip their toes. Evidently, such boldness could not be expected from Knesset-elected premiers.

Apparently, directly elected leaders are better equipped to sense what makes Middle Israeli tick, rant, and rage, and they also are compelled to do something about it, knowing that the new system won't allow prime ministerial aspirants to endlessly graze our political pastures despite successive failures to win power, the way Shimon Peres and Menachem Begin did.

Yes, both Barak and Netanyahu have been doing a lot of teething, from the former's silly to-be-or-not-to-be philosophizing on what he might have done if he hadn't been himself, or the latter's resounding whisper into Rabbi Kadouri's ear, questioning the Left's attachment to Judaisim.

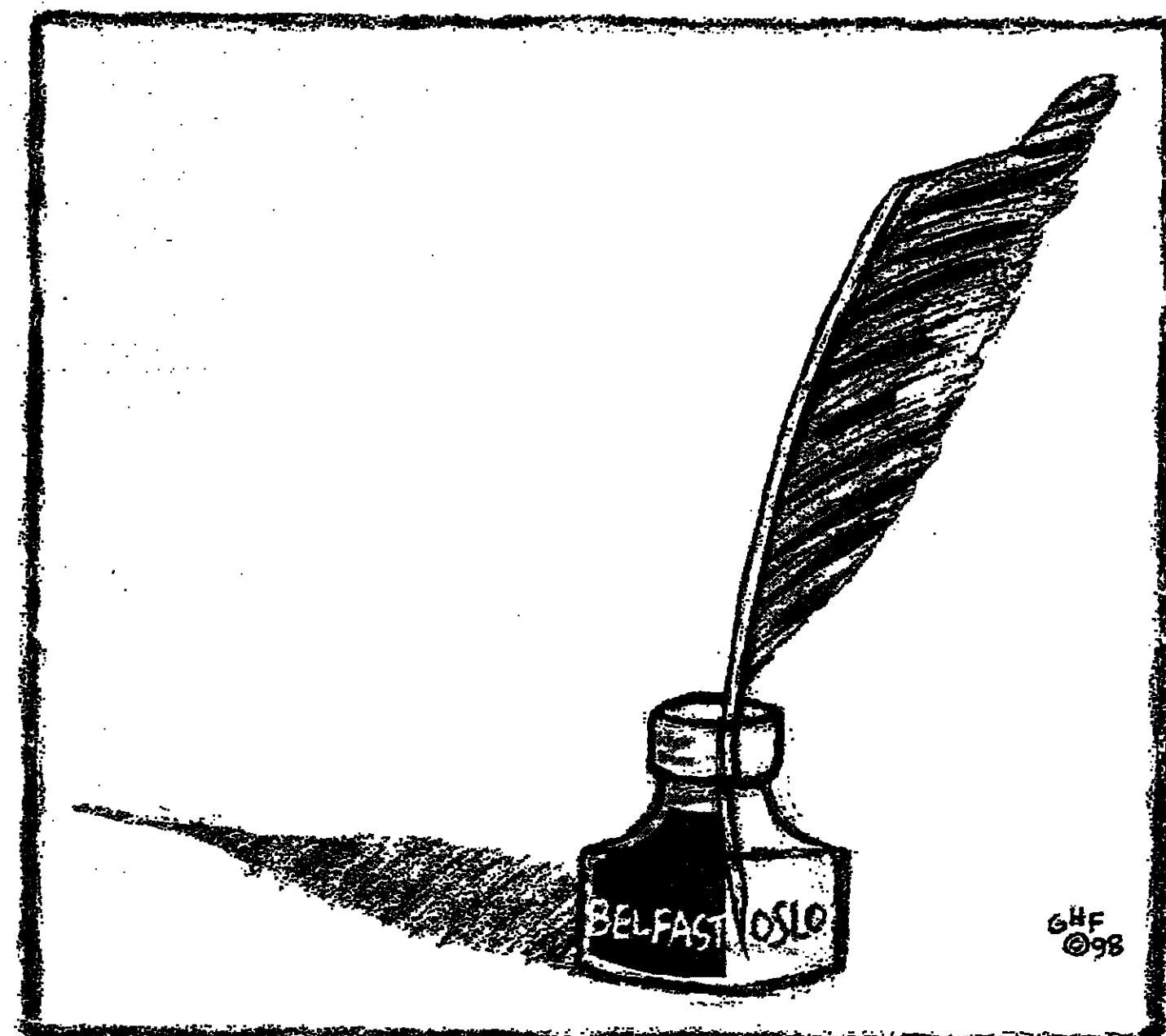
But the fear and speed with which the two apologized for and reversed those slips of tongue means that we the people now matter much more than we did under their predecessors' reign.

Begin never apologized for having portrayed kibbutzniks as effendis "sitting by their swimming pools," because he never thought of running after their votes. Netanyahu, on the other hand, had to apologize, because the new system compels him to focus on the Middle Israeli electorate, including tens of thousands of pork-eating, Sabbath-desecrating, and even intermarried Israelis.

Barak also understood this, with his apology to Israel's non-Ashkenazim, a gesture which offered a refreshing contrast to the broadsides Yitzhak Rabin frequently hurled at constituencies to which he did not belong.

Yes, both Barak and Netanyahu have encountered, and are likely to continue deflecting, a kind of collegial backstabbing that wouldn't embarrass Brutus. But at the end of the day they should remember that the quest to dispose of the new political system mainly hides a displeasure with the directly elected leaders' inescapable accountability, and that what people like former premiers Peres and Shamir or MKs Belin and Meridor miss most is not a better system, but personal clout.

And yes, both Netanyahu and Barak have assumed their positions unfortunately shorn of political experience. But considering their ostensibly savvy predecessors' successful navigation of the Zionist Titanic into the icebergs of economic statism, Lebanese guerrilla warfare, and haredi civic robbery, maybe such fresh-thinking novices are exactly what we need.



den conflict between the two communities in Northern Ireland. But we should not deceive ourselves that it can act as a recipe for the settlement of any other conflict.

In fact, the bloody conflict in Northern Ireland stems from a previous peace agreement (1921) in which Northern Ireland, which has a Protestant majority, was incorporated into the United Kingdom (Britain).

This was the point at issue between the Catholics and the Protestants. The new peace agreement doesn't reduce the territory of British sovereignty in Ulster, and only creates a more complicated arrangement for coexistence of the two rival communities within the geographical division laid down more than 75 years ago.

If we use terms borrowed from the vocabulary of the Israel-

The agreement contains no British commitment to transfer "territories" to the Irish, neither 9% nor 13%. The agreement just defines guidelines for "restricted autonomy," a parliament in Belfast and local government, intended to consult also with the Dublin government on various economic and social questions. Defense and foreign affairs remain entirely in the hands of the UK government.

The Irish government's commitment to remove from its constitution the clause defining the borders of the country to include Northern Ireland is also similar to the PLO's commitment to remove from the Palestinian covenant the clauses denying Israel's right to exist. And the British will certainly want more than a promise from Sinn Féin that it has relinquished its claim to Northern Ireland.

ditions are harder. Ross received a difficult inheritance - the Oslo Agreement - which restricts his maneuverability.

If he had been at Oslo, perhaps Ross would have whispered to the Israeli representatives that before the framework of the permanent settlement was agreed, they shouldn't commit themselves to the dates of meaningful withdrawals from the territories beyond the initial areas of Gaza and Jericho intended for the establishment of the Palestinian Authority.

Now Ross has to be involved in the interpretation of the Oslo Agreement in order to determine the extent of the required IDF withdrawal. The tangled bargaining on interpretation doesn't allow him room to maneuver and to produce creative solutions. In spite of

heart he understands that the essential disagreement is, not about the percentage of territory in Judea and Samaria from which the IDF will withdraw, but the crisis due in May 1999. This is Arafat's target date for the proclamation of a Palestinian state, whether in agreement with Israel or diametrically opposed to Israel's intentions. Extending Palestinian rule to wider territories before an Israeli-Palestinian agreement will hasten the implementation of Arafat's plans for May 1999.

British Prime Minister Tony Blair, also due to make an official visit to Israel next week, has no such problems in the implementation of the Belfast Agreement. He has succeeded, also with the help of an American mediator, to reject any suggestion of British territorial compromise.

The View from the East

DAUD KUTTAB

Palestinian women move out of the shadows

Something unusual happened recently. Heated discussions have taken place among Palestinians in which Israel was not a party to the debate. No, I am not talking about the row over who killed Muhi Shafir. The mysterious death of "Engineer No. 2" actually diverted attention from the heated debate that has engulfed Palestinians during the past month.

The parties to this fierce debate were Palestinian women activists on the one hand and Islamic clerics on the other.

The trigger that blew the lid was a series of awareness programs that a coalition of Palestinian women conducted under the title "A model parliament."

Through these seminars and workshops which took place all over Palestine, women met and discussed issues of importance to them and nominated delegates for a two-day conference that took the shape of a parliament.

During the months of preparation, women were introduced to various stages that bills go through before becoming law. The Palestinian Legislative Council gave guidance and advice and lent the women its regular meeting location for some of the sessions.

While the women talked about a variety of issues, naturally the gender issue and relations between women and men were high on the list of topics in which these women thought that changes are needed in any future law. In fact, these women were suggesting possible amendments to the existing Jordanian law that deals with issues of personal status.

Changing laws dealing with issues of marriage, divorce, inheritance, child care, and so on was long considered a taboo. Armed with a variety of liberal personal

status laws from countries like Tunisia and Pakistan, the women were suggesting that a serious look should be given to amending the existing law that governs the personal status of Palestinians.

To many Muslim clerics the idea of changing these laws was as close to religious rebellion as one can get. What followed was a series of sharp attacks against the model parliament and the women's movement from the pulpit of many Palestinian mosques, including Al Aksa. The organizers of the model parliament were attacked as threatening the Islamic name of Palestinian society and told that their efforts to replace Islamic Sharia law were unacceptable.

Although the attacks from the mosques were tough, the threats and innuendoes that followed were worse. But the women held firm and began fighting back publicly, with many in the Palestinian National Assembly and the Palestinian non-governmental organization community publicly endorsing their right to express their opinions free of threats.

THE most heated debate took place on local television stations. Palestine TV ignored the issue and it got little coverage in the established Palestinian press. Women and Islamic clerics appeared on some programs and fought it out with callers asking questions or aligning with this or that side. The women explained that with the Sharia being the main source of Palestinian legislation, but that the existing Jordanian law left much to be desired even by Islamic standards.

If the existing law can be improved without contradicting Islamic principles, there should be no problem, they argued. Setting a minimum legal age, for example,

can provide for a better Palestinian society because it would reduce early marriages. While Islam provides for women getting an inheritance (even though it is measured as half the portion of a male), Palestinian tradition forces women to give up even that share. Why not create legislation, the women argued, that could protect women from losing the inheritance that Islam guarantees them.

The Islamic personalities who appeared with these women argued that the issue of personal status is so delicate that it should not be dealt with so lightly, especially by lay people. They totally rejected the concept that Islam should be the main source

of Palestinian legislation.

They insisted that it should be the only source of legislation. They scoffed at the women arguing that this issue should be handled only by religious experts and they rejected the idea of using the Tunisian or any other liberal Islamic model.

While the women made a valiant effort, the Islamic leaders clearly won the public battle, simply because of the fact that they have the medium of the mosque as well as their well established religious role. The women, who probably were not prepared enough, seem to have underestimated prevailing traditions and religious power.

Some have argued that the women made a mistake by introducing such a sensitive topic without much more preparation. But for many leaders of the Palestinian women's movement, the fact that they succeeded in getting these burning issues out on the debating floor was a big victory. And for them, the attacks were just proof that they touched an important nerve in Palestinian society that has been ignored for a long time because of the predominance of the political discussion.

If anything, these courageous women have shown that there is reason for Palestinians to be hopeful for social as well as political freedom on the horizon.

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Weekender

Defining a generation?

'Seinfeld' might be the funniest comedy ever, but the eulogies have gotten out of hand

By HOWARD ROSENBERG

The buzz over *Seinfeld* is building. Not just to pre-emptuate its May 14 US finale with endless loud oom-pah-pahs, but to worship reverently at the altar of the planet's funniest comedy. But also to establish the immortality of Jerry, George, Elaine and Kramer, and celebrate their lasting imprint on humankind.

How lasting?

It defined an entire generation and changed television forever," says one with a wild sense of humor, who was saying about *Seinfeld* on TV recently.

Come again?

Someone needs to get a grip. *Seinfeld* is indeed woven tightly into the fabric of pop culture and the structure of NBC, and its cast is so familiar and closely identified with the show that Jerry Seinfeld, Jason Alexander (George), Julia Louis-Dreyfus (Elaine) and Michael Richards (Kramer) can evoke laughter merely by walking onto a stage. For the geriatric, their appeal is manic.

Although the writing on *Seinfeld* has always been sophisticated, the 30 million or so who tune in every week, even during its last, least funny season, cannot all be young urbanites who relate to the weirdness of Manhattan.

And my wife do, my mother, age 85, watches even every rerun. Maybe it's in the genes.

And I know of an elderly man who watches the series religiously. He is a fanatic whose ages date back to the early 90s.

It is clearly a common denominator, a thread linking Americans. So all of those oom-pah-pahs are deserved.

But defining an entire generation changing TV inevitably? Why throw in curing cancer, too? Being wheezingly funny isn't enough.

As surely as one yada follows another, this exaggerated, bloated *Seinfeld* anointment was inevitable as the series began winding down after a historic run on NBC that began on May 5, 1999.

People were practically in tears for eulogies. We spread it around when we crank each other into the ground, and do the same when we bury memorable TV series. And in this case, *Seinfeld* is affixed to stratospheric in so many ways that it's tempting to sail it a little higher by assigning it broad sociological implications.

But consider: Despite their cohesion and hilarity as bizarre comedy characters, Jerry, George, Elaine and Kramer are selfish, paranoid, untrustworthy, thoughtless, hostile and superficial. So shallow that Jerry changes the "32" size to "31" on his jeans, and he once broke up with a girlfriend because she ate her peas one at a time.

So shallow that Elaine once decided boyfriend worthy of her treatment, contraceptive sponges only when he agreed to cut his sideburns.

So shallow that Jerry, George and Kramer visit a bookstore... only for the purpose of meeting women.

The enormous flaws of *Seinfeld* characters are precisely their allure. Their misbehavior at moral and ethical crossroads is predictable, their pettiness pathological.



(From left) Jason Alexander, Jerry Seinfeld, Julia Louis-Dreyfus and Michael Richards can evoke laughter merely by walking onto a stage.

Jerry once mugged an old lady for a loaf of marble rye. And George is so callous that he could barely contain his glee when, after trying for so long to dump his fiancée, Susan, she died from licking their cheapie wedding invitation envelopes.

Seinfeld characters respond to everything viscerally. Their views of the universe and their personal relationships are driven by the same level of weightless trivia that they sit around and dissect endlessly. They're at once dependably self-absorbed and relentlessly undependable.

They're supposed to be close friends, yet unhesitatingly knife each other in the back for personal advantage.

Family dysfunction is also a constant theme. George once stole his father's clothes and once had sex in his parents' bed, leaving behind a condom. Lower their grammar a few notches, and you can see this crowd with Jerry Springer.

Watch them, of course. Love them, of course. But do they define your generation? Anyone's generation? Get serious. They don't define mine.

And what about this business of *Seinfeld* shaping television? Some series do that. On ABC, it was *Monday Night Football*, for example. On NBC, *The Tonight Show* and *Today*, and their many seedlings, have resonated across the decades. On Fox, *The Simpsons* refocused TV on prime-time animated series, initiating a contemporary trend that seems to be ever growing. And on CBS, *60 Minutes* has transformed much of television, not necessarily for the good, with prime-time now awash with its magazine-show progeny that collectively have supplanted the traditional long-form documentary as a purported source of in-depth

coverage on network TV.

But *Seinfeld*?

Although other comedies have sought to mimic and follow its path of savagely goofy schmoozing, these are small footprints on the landscape of TV.

Meanwhile, comedies about nothing have been populating TV nearly since its inception. Insignificance has always been the mother's milk

of sitcomdom, in fact.

Although it never will be memorialized as scintillating, for example, *The Adventures of Oz* and *Harriet* beat *Seinfeld* to the Holy Grail of nothingness by about 37 years. Watching the micro-lives of the Nelsons, each week made your own life, however bland, seem vibrant and exciting in comparison.

And from this prototype came the likes of *My Three Sons* and *The Brady Bunch*, all of which make *Seinfeld* and its own inspired nonsense seem almost mealy.

But meaty, smeary, *Seinfeld* doesn't have to define a generation or change TV to be celebrated as the funniest comedy ever.

And that is the only accolade that matters. (Los Angeles Times)

Celebrating the end

By TIM WHITMORE

New York institutions from baseball's Yankees to Radio City Music Hall are hustling to get in on celebrations of the finale of *Seinfeld*.

Some schemes are grandiose, like the big idea to shut down Times Square to la New Year's Eve for a street party and mass viewing of the hour-long final episode of the popular TV comedy series on May 14.

Mayor Rudolph Giuliani vetoed that plan as too disruptive. The Yankees - *Seinfeld* friend George Costanza's one-time employer on the show - were considering seeking rights to show the finale on Yankee Stadium's jumbo screen after that night's game. *The New York Times* reported. But an NBC executive said the Yankees couldn't screen the show for a paying audience.

Radio City Music Hall even volunteered to play host for a *Seinfeld* farewell party. "Radio City is a New York institution and so is *Seinfeld*," Radio City Productions president Arlen Kantarian said, adding that the theater is across the street from NBC.

Actually, the show is filmed in Los Angeles.

For nine seasons, Jerry, Elaine, George, Kramer and Newman have been dealing with several only-in-New York topics such as apartment angst and taking heat from the "Soup Nazi," the temperamental purveyor of gourmet soups.

Real places, from a kosher bakery to Yankee Stadium, have served as settings in the highly rated show, and now with hype building toward the final episode, the real world is taking cues from *Seinfeld*.

The real-life counterpart of *Seinfeld*'s Cosmo Kramer said he's been deluged with May 14 party invitations. "I intend to be part of the frivolity that's going on around the city," said Kenny Kramer, who runs a "reality tour" of *Seinfeld*-related New York sites. He said he plans to spend the day with a radio station and attend a *New York Times* party at a comedy club.

Some radio stations are giving away trips to New York and tickets to Kramer's tour as part of *Seinfeld* farewell promotions.

NBC executives did not return phone messages seeking comment on the network's plans for a *Seinfeld* party.

This being New York, some people need their *Seinfeld* send-off to have plenty of urban cool and cachet, which explains the rush to rent some of New York's best-known settings.

Tom's Restaurant is instantly recognizable to *Seinfeld* viewers. The facade of the eatery at Broadway and 112th Street is used as the exterior of Monk's, where the main characters hang out.

Maxim magazine issued a statement bragging that it had rented Tom's for May 14 - a deal it breathlessly labeled as "the publishing party coup of the year." *Maxim* said it had invited "150+ movers and shakers" and would show the finale on giant TVs outside.

On the street, some fans shrugged off the hype surrounding the finale.

"I'll probably just watch it at home," Cliff Paulson said. Steve Fiegel was even more underwhelmed, saying people planning *Seinfeld* parties "need to get a life." (AP)

Chaos in Archaos

By SOME LEMOR

It's Friday night in Jerusalem. The shops are closed, the streets are full of 12-year-olds, you're all dressed up with nowhere to go.

Well in Tel Aviv you'll find Archaos. This nightclub opens its doors only at 12:30 a.m. and closes in the early hours of the morning. At 5 a.m. people are still there having fun in their black PVC micro-mini skirts and ripped jeans.

"People come from all over to our club," says publicist Ori Koren. "Archaos gets a strong Tel Aviv crowd every week." Koren's colleague Kobi Segev says the club has issued more than 850 membership cards since it opened in November 1986. The club was completely renovated two months ago.

The three owners - Ori Levi, Lior Rachmani, and Amos Yossef - are not new to the party profession. Levi is resident DJ and also hosts a program on the local FM station, Radio Yehudaim: "Calli Out" on Fridays at 10 p.m.-2 a.m. Rachmani is also a Radio Yehudaim DJ, hosting "Smart Aleck" on Tuesdays and Thursdays at 11 p.m.-12 a.m. The three partners have worked in nightclubs since the Eighties.

Archaos has two levels and a garden bar. The first floor, called Archaos, is industrial-looking, dark and metallic. To enter, you walk through a small unlit hallway that is painted black. On the floor Levi plays the latest tracks in Trance and House music.

To get to the garden bar, you go outside and through a gate which leads into the garden. With its trees and grass and wooden bar, "it feels sort of like a backyard party," says Julie, an American tourist.

The bartender, who was probably hired for his looks, was leaning on the bar watching the crowd, and owners Rachmani and Levi were greeting regulars as I arrived.

The second floor of the club is called Exit, which you enter by climbing the metal stairs leading from the garden bar and up into the loud music of DJ Itzik Dor. Dor plays hits from the Eighties as well as popular current rock and some R&B.

"Exit is small and reminds me of a basement party" says Itay, a law student in Jerusalem. "But it's definitely fun."

There's a huge window on one side from which you can see the lower level Archaos club.

Archaos produces its own CDs. The first, *Mixer 1*, has sold over 8,000 copies since it came out in July. *Mixer 2* came out last week and has already sold more than 1,000 copies. It's a double disc of music played at the club, with Levi as DJ and Yoram Vazana doing the mix.

On Thursdays Archaos is closed and Exit's space is rented out to Carmie, who owned the recently closed Gotham pub. He's started throwing "Shaka" parties, where alternative music is played. "We're not connected with Archaos, we just rent the space. 'Shaka' is a totally different concept," says Carmie.

Archaos is open Fridays from 12:30 a.m. until dawn with a cover charge of NIS 50, NIS 40 with an invitation, and NIS 30 with a student card. Invitations can be obtained at Shesh Cafe, Rehov Ha Soreg 1.

Archaos can also be rented out for private parties, semester blowouts, weddings or anything else. "You have to experience the chaos to know Archaos," says Kobi Segev. Call him for details at 052-679-116 or Ori Koren at 050-586-672.

Archaos, 2 Ha'oman St., Talpiot, Jerusalem

Drama on my mind

Theater director Jack Messinger talks about his favorite plays



2. *Peter Pan* (1904) by Sir James M. Barrie

"It was the first play I ever saw - at age five or six - and it left me with an enduring fascination for the magic of theater. Peter is a perfect role model for artists. He keeps alive the child within, collects frequent-flyer points to Never-Never Land while remaining heroically faithful to his friends and 'family,' to his own shadow, and to Tinkerbell."

3. *Hamlet* (1603) by William Shakespeare

"This is still my favorite of Shakespeare's plays (*Richard II* runs a close second). I've seen probably two dozen different productions of the play. My favorite was videotaped on location in Elsinore with Christopher Plummer playing the prince. The thing about *Hamlet* is that it fits every generation. Each actor makes a new *Hamlet* for his time, and every good production seems like a modern revival."

4. *Spring Awakening* (1981) by Frank Wedekind

"This is the play I most recently directed at Nissan Naiv Acting Studio in Jerusalem, and it was a revelation to me. It tells of the effects of a brilliant yet authoritarian society on its youth at the time of their sexual awakening; it is subtitled 'A Tragedy of Childhood.' Its combination of psychological acuity and totally original theatricality is stunningly modern. Preaching for moral balance between the dualities of freedom and responsibility, the play is a disturbing reminder that the German culture that fomented the Holocaust of hate also produced pinnacles of humanistic achievement."

5. *My Mother's Courage* (1979) by George Tabori

"Originally a radio play, this is post-Brechtian Hungarian writer Tabori's ironically autobiographical attempt to tell the story of how his mother saved herself from the Auschwitz death camps. He casts himself as the Son who is confronted by the Mother in a life vs. art quarrel over the story's details. By using distancing techniques of satire, cabaret and slapstick, Tabori produces a warmly personal, easily digested, and very powerful Holocaust drama."

- Marne Rochester

Hot tips

By DAHLIA SCHEDLIN

Tel Aviv

Don't take the holidays too seriously - take in laughs instead! Tel Aviv is bursting with comedy tonight, as Dadi Milman and Roi Levy perform *Megalomania*, their new stand-up comic duet, tonight at Tzavta at 9:30.

Tzavta 2 continues the side-splitting with *Nonsense*, at 10:30 p.m., featuring Adir Miller, Asi Cohen and a full range of humorous others.

But Tel Aviv audiences are insatiable: still more comic entertain-

ment can be found at the ZOA House tonight, where Shalom Assayag performs a stand-up comedy show, at the same time as comedy routine Eli and Mariano. Both begin at 12:45 a.m.

Can't make it till midnight? Then skip the comedy and opt for music instead. Meir Suissa presents a new musical entertainment production, *Suissa Iyar*, at 10 p.m. at the ZOA. 1 Daniel Frisch (03) 695-9341.

The theater scene tonight offers Beit Lessin's rollicking production of *The Venetian Twins* tonight at the Eretz Israel Museum at 9:30. Call (03) 696-1297.

The Cinematheque completes its fantasy series of the week with a screening of *The Lord of the Rings*, Ralph Bakshi's 1978 cartoon. Then at 10 p.m., the German-Portuguese co-production *Lisbon Story* is playing. The final word goes back to the fantasy theme, however, with *The Hobbit* at midnight. 2 Sprinzak St. (03) 691-7181.

Hard-rocker-turned-nice-boy with a healthy Latin American

sound, Paylo Rosenberg plays tonight at Logos, starting at 10 p.m. 8 Hashomer, (03) 516-1176. A healthy dose of jazz can be found this evening at The Open Studio, featuring Uri Bracha, Papo Levy and Pancho Blumenzweig. At 24 Carmia, call (03) 685-6787.

Jerusalem

Magic takes hold of the mystical city! Four Israeli magicians perform tonight at the International Convention Center, including Tzipi Shavit and Hani Nahmias. Two shows for the brave and the believing, at 11 a.m., and 8 p.m.

Feeling theologically inclined, given the holiday spirit? Mishkenot Sha'ananim is holding its 1998 Encounters for Religion and Culture, on the sexy, ambitious topic of "The Sexual Divide: Human and the Divine." Tikva Frymer-Kensky, professor of Hebrew Bible, offers a lecture this morning entitled "Women of Metaphor, Metaphors of Women:

The Conceptual Role of Women in the Bible." 9 a.m. (02) 625-4321. Take the kids even if it's not raining: the Israel Museum has free entry today, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Musical intrigue in Jerusalem will put listeners in a holiday spirit, from the Christian perspective: the International Organ Concert takes place in the Old City, at the Redeemer Church tonight, at 8 p.m. Attendees may also meet at the Jaffa Gate at 7:40 p.m. Call (02) 627-6111.

And Points Beyond

Hasimta Theater in Old Jaffa is showing *The Fall* at 10:30 p.m., and at 9 p.m. *Superior Beings*, a tale of a couple on a murder spree, directed by Niko Ntai. 8 Mazal Dagim, (03) 681-2126.

Cheerier content is found at Puppet Theater today at Ein Hod, starting at 11 a.m., at the Circus Tent.

No Thursday is complete without the blues: Ronnie Peterson and his blues band perform tonight

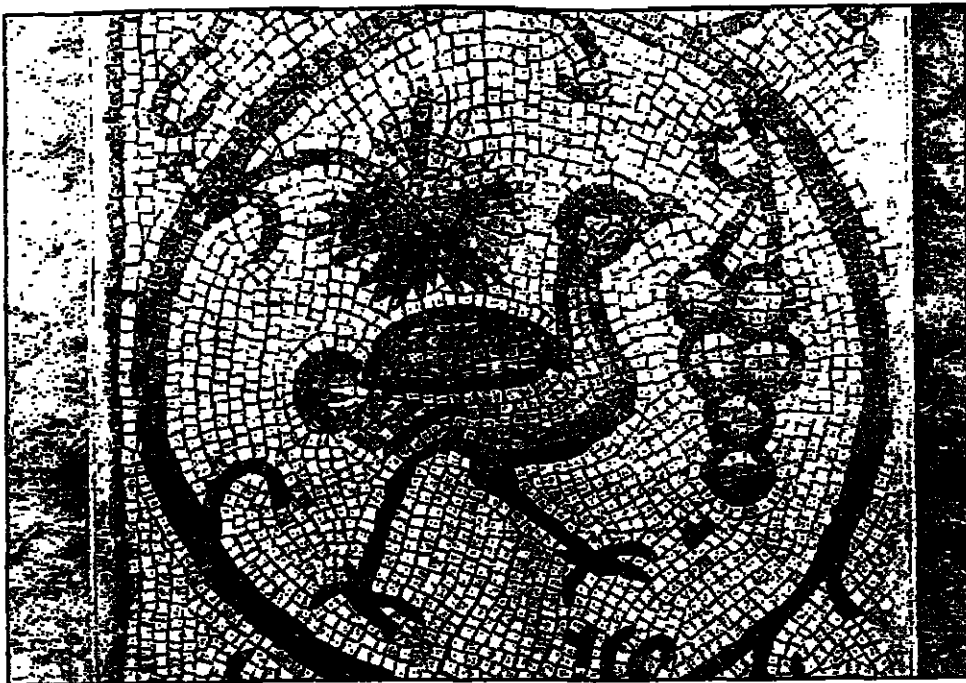
at Tivon, starting at 10 p.m. (04) 983-7043.

Television

Profiles of the world's famous musicians is the television theme tonight: ITV 3 airs *In the World Tonight*, at 11:30 p.m., a documentary about Paul McCartney - specifically, the making of his latest album. Never fear - footage of the Beatles is included. No less important than Sir Paul is Elmad Manor, whose life is presented by Shlomo Artzi at an even more accessible hour, 9 p.m., on Channel 1.

Movie night is varied, ranging from morbid to solemn to good old romance. Respectively: *Flesh and Blood*, by Paul Verhoeven, stars the ever-sinister Rutger Hauer and the generally gritty Jennifer Jason Leigh, on the Movie Channel at 11:55 p.m. *Family Pictures* airs at 2:30 p.m. on Channel 3. And the incessantly feel-good *Indiscreet*, starring Cary Grant and Ingrid Bergman, is on Second Showing at 10:15 p.m.

Weekender Travel



On display at the Bible Lands Museum in the special exhibition 'Sacred Bounty Sacred Land': (Left) Composite floor, stone tesserae, 475-525 C.E.; (right) Statue of Bacchus, bronze, 1st Century C.E. Both show the prevalence of grapes in ancient mythology. (Photos: Yoram Lehmann)



Threads of the ancient world

The Bible Lands Museum in Jerusalem, which is based primarily on the private collection of its founder, Dr. Elie Borowski, displays objects that depict religious myths and scenes of everyday life from the ancient Near East.

These objects are far more than an eclectic assortment of items from disparate lands and cultures. They draw together the threads connecting the cultures of the ancient world.

This goal is perhaps best realized in the museum's latest exhibition, Sacred Bounty Sacred Land, The Seven Species of the Land of Israel.

This exhibition, which seems far more extensive than other special shows mounted by the museum, has culled objects from a wide variety of sources, including private collections and museums in the US, Austria and Germany, as well as Israel.

Although the exhibition is presented in celebration of the state's jubilee, it is highly appropriate that it opened before Passah, the beginning of the counting of the Omer, when the sheaf offering of the new harvest was brought to the Temple.

The species include wheat, barley, the fruit of the vine, figs, pomegranates, olives and honey. These species are common among other cultures in the Middle East as well.

In the imagery, it is often difficult to distinguish between wheat and barley. But, according to museum guide Gidon Yisraeli, wheat is often considered female, while barley is regarded as male.

Among the exhibits in this section is a corn

Day Tripper

By Haim Shapiro

mummy from Egypt – a miniature mummy in human form containing grain rather than a body. The exhibit also contains coins depicting ears of wheat, attesting to a commerce of grain from Southern Italy to Greece in the fourth century BCE.

In terms of comparison, the most striking species is the fruit of the vine.

Yisraeli points out that the Jews tended to view the grape as a blessing, while those around them stressed the influence of alcohol. One can see the classic figures of mythology holding up bunches of grapes.

However, there are also similarities, the most impressive of which is a large lamp from Carthage in North Africa, dating from the fourth or fifth century CE. It shows two men carrying a pole from which hangs a huge bunch of grapes. It is the same theme used in Jewish sources to represent the spies sent to the Land of Canaan. This symbol is used today by the Israeli Ministry of Tourism.

As might be expected in an exhibit on this theme, there are many examples of actual produce from antiquity which have been preserved to this day.

The exhibit is dotted with notices explaining that the lighting has had to be dimmed for exhibits containing organic matter, to keep

them from disintegrating.

One showcase contains a jar from Ekron, almost intact, from the 13th century BCE. The one broken side exposes row upon row of dried figs, threaded on a rope, just as they are often sold today.

In fact, while the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge has often been represented as an apple in Western iconography, the Babylonian Talmud and many midrashim maintain that it was the fig.

In Jewish tradition, the fig is linked with wisdom and Torah – in stark contrast to the classical image of the fig as the attribute of the phallic god Priapus.

Pomegranates are represented in gold jewelry, including a very modern-looking necklace with a series of dangling golden pomegranates. It is with the date palm, though, that one feels the closest link to Jewish sources. Among the images of palms is one etched on a jar discovered at the Ophel site in Jerusalem attributed to the Iron Age.

Another palm tree is represented on an ivory plaque, from Samaria, very possibly from the ivory palace built by the evil King Ahab. Another palm tree is found on a mosaic from a sixth century CE synagogue from Hammam Lif, the ancient Carthage in North Africa.

The Bible Lands Museum is open Sunday, Monday, Tuesday and Thursday from 9:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., on Wednesday from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m., on Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. and on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Admission is NIS 23 for adults, NIS 12 for children.

Apocalypse then

Close Encounters

By Allan Rabinowitz



An aerial view of Tel Megiddo.

(Werner Braun)

Imagine a great Egyptian army, 3,500 years ago, under Pharaoh Thutmose III, marching north along the coastal dunes of Israel until, near today's Hadera power station, the army cuts northeast into the rolling hills.

The path it follows, later dubbed the Via Maris (Way of the Sea) by the Romans, is already well-worn and ancient, connecting Egypt to that other anchor of civilization, Mesopotamia, through the long-arching swath of settlement and roads known as the Fertile Crescent.

But in Israel the Fertile Crescent has narrowed to a buckled, sandy highway, and the Egyptian army is now traversing the highest part, the narrow pass of Nahal Eron, or Wadi Ara. And where that defile meets the expansive Jezreel Valley at the junction called Megiddo, Thutmose must face a coalition of Canaanite kings, gathered by the hilltop fortress to block his passage. He smashes them, and the Egyptian inscription of that battle is the earliest mention of Megiddo.

But Megiddo, guarded that vital junction for the preceding two thousand years and continued in that role for another thousand years.

The archaeological dig, now a national park, is some 23 layers thick. Perhaps no spot more clearly demonstrates the power of geography in shaping the course of ancient Israel than this city-fortress on a hill, literally straddling the crossroads of the world.

Before climbing the tel, watch the excellent video in the main hall of the visitor center, then visit the model of the site itself.

The video dramatically conveys, in an almost microscopic sense, the ongoing human struggle, at military, political and religious levels, personified and exemplified by this one site. The model, with its movable levels, helps to make sense of the location of the main features on the site and the overlapping and

intersecting between structures from various epochs.

The extensive excavations make it easy to visualize the ancient reality.

The hill stands apart from other hills in the region, and the parameters which would have been lined by walls are clearly delineated.

The Solomonic ramp leading up to the city, upon which royal chariots charged and then proved sharply into the city gate complex, is clearly discernible, as is the gate complex itself, with its individual guard chambers and its finely embossed and fitted stones.

Scrambling on the narrow path would have stood above the gates, gazed out across the great valley and announced the arrival of an army or a diplomatic delegation or the king himself.

For Megiddo was the most central of Solomon's fortified cities.

Peering behind the ramp's gates, palaces, and military stables, we can picture the centralized authority and the political calculations that the shrewd monarch implemented there.

Built on the backs of Jewish workers from the northern tribes of Israel and defeated Canaanite minorities, a secure Megiddo would have been a testament to the power of the kingdom.

King Ahab, who ruled in the early days of the northern kingdom of Israel, though ruling a much smaller kingdom, also invested the resources of his centralized rule in securing Megiddo.

His gate structure is sealed in with Solomon's.

The stairs for foot traffic, upon which peddlers of produce from the Jezreel Valley to the Jordan and beyond would have trooped, are still visible from the observation point at the top of this man-made mound.

you can gaze north to Mt. Tabor, along which the ancient trade and military route stretched toward the Sea of Galilee, then Damascus, then Assyria and Babylon.

You can clearly picture ancient armies clashing before you in the Jezreel Valley, which functioned as a trade, military and migration route, as well as a rich grain-growing region.

Read Chronicles II (25:22) on this platform and you can practically see King Josiah of Judah, in 609, clambering through the Samaritan hills to cut off the Egyptians at this pass, only to be slain.

So intertwined with the ancient struggle for power is this spot, that in the Book of Revelations in the New Testament, a huge battle between good and evil is prophesied to be fought on the plain of Megiddo (derived from the Hebrew *Har Megiddo*, *Mountain of War*).

Seven in modern times from the time of Napoleon's 1810-1811 campaign to the Israeli War of Independence – battles were fought here. Armageddon, the symbolic term for many wars of modern apocalypse, takes its name from this seemingly perpetual battlefield.

A large grain silo, the only such one found in the country, dating from the ninth century BCE, highlights Megiddo's role as a central grain depot even after the split of the two kingdoms. The stables which held the horses of Ahab's chariot force, the troughs from which they drank, and the square on which they were trained, are clearly visible.

But nothing demonstrates the central role of Megiddo in Ahab's time better than the sophisticated water system which he built.

Megiddo had a real problem with water. The spring that supplied the population with water lay outside the walls. To secure that source, King Ahab dug through the earlier layers of habitation and sank a deep vertical shaft through the rock.

He then built a horizontal tunnel to a deep pool gouged deep in the earth outside the walls, into which the spring waters were diverted. It is a beautifully planned hydraulic system.

With the thought of this system in mind, and highly recommended (though it means ascending about 185 steps and ascending 90).

You'll emerge near a parking lot outside the park and walk back to the main visitor center, where transportation can be arranged to meet you there.

Megiddo is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily during winter, and 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily during summer. It is closed on Fridays, and on Jewish holidays. Closing an hour earlier on Fridays, entry to the water tunnel is free. Reservations before 10 a.m. are free. The Tel Megiddo National Park is located on the road to Hadera, 10 km. from Hadera.

NATIONAL INSURANCE INSTITUTE

AMENDMENT TO THE SOCIAL INSURANCE AGREEMENT BETWEEN ISRAEL AND GERMANY

Reminder and Additional Information

Under the terms of the above amendment, Jews of East European origin have the right to receive an Old Age and Survivors' Pension from German Social Insurance, if they fulfill all the following conditions:

1. They immigrated to Israel before July 1, 1990, and hold Israeli citizenship.
2. They accumulated periods of work in East European countries. (See note* after Para. 3.)
3. During the period in which the influence of National Socialism spread to what was then the applicant's homeland, the applicant's language and culture were German, and he/she was then aged 16 or over. Pension applicants will be invited to pass a German language test.

* Applicants for an old age pension must obtain documents from social insurance institutes in East European countries, testifying that they have worked in these countries. These documents must be sent to Germany. A widow or widower who applies for a survivors' pension should send to Germany documents, testifying that his/her spouse worked in these countries.

The German law recognizes the following, as substantiation of the required work periods:

Original documents, declarations by witnesses, sworn statements.

A sworn statement can be accepted as proof, only if the claimant has not succeeded in obtaining other substantiating documents, and only if he/she has requested and obtained agreement from the German social security institute, to accept such a statement.

If you have obtained a declaration form from Germany, you should complete it and bring it to the National Insurance Institute for authentication and stamping. You should come to one of the following offices, bringing your identity card:

1. National Insurance Institute Liaison Office for International Agreements, Head Office, 11 Rehov Hazvi, Jerusalem, Tel. 02-670-9913; Sunday to Thursday, 9:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

2. Jerusalem branch office of the National Insurance Institute, 4 Rehov Ben Shetah, Tel. 02-675-5450, Sun., Tue., Thur., 8:30 a.m. - 12 noon.

3. Tel Aviv branch office of the National Insurance Institute, 15 Rehov Masaryk, 03-697-1327, Sun., Tue., Thur., 8:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

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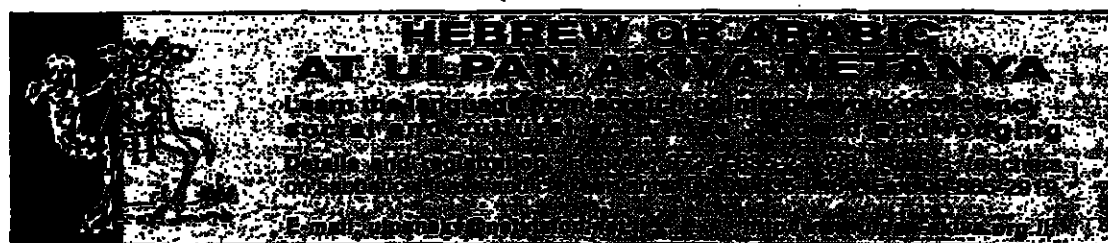
Applications should be submitted on the "Addendum to Agreement" form. These forms and an explanatory booklet can be obtained at any National Insurance Institute branch, or by calling 02-670-9913, 02-670-9393, 02-670-9637. Sunday to Thursday, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m.

The completed form should be submitted to the NII branch nearest your home or sent to the National Insurance Institute, Liaison Office for International Agreements, POB 90009, Jerusalem 91909.

Last date for submitting claims - May 31, 1998.

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Information & Public Relations Department

When Tony Blair comes calling

High expectations will be riding on Tony Blair when he arrives in Israel on Sunday afternoon. Fresh from his triumph in negotiating a framework agreement to the 300-year-old conflict between Irish Protestants and Catholics last weekend, the pragmatic, can-do British prime minister will be seeking to repeat his peace-making magic in the Middle East.

Bearing a mandate from the 15-nation European Union, of which he holds the current presidency, and carrying the blessing of US President Bill Clinton, with whom he has established a close personal and political relationship, Blair will be seeking to break the impasse and resuscitate the stalled Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

Through circumstance and contrivance, Blair will be able to deploy a diplomatic armory that far exceeds Britain's innate capabilities as a medium-rank European power.

He has said he regards the peace process as a "one of the most important foreign policy priorities for Britain" during its current presidency of the European Union.

"Failure" and "disappointment" are not frequently recurring words in the Blair political lexicon. Beyond the appearance of boyish charm and earnest rhetoric is a political will of steel and a determination that borders on ruthlessness.

Charm alone did not allow him to snatch the leadership of his party three years ago at the age of just 41, to revolutionize a political movement that had been unelectable for almost two decades, and then to lead it to a crushing victory last May. "He is," in the words of a senior diplomat in London who clearly admires the Blair style, "an operator with a very cool head and a very hard nose."

Tony Blair has traveled a long way since his days as lead singer in the rock group Ugly Rumors while studying law at Oxford University. It is likely that, having already reached the summit of political achievement in Britain, he still has a long way to go.

Blair will not repeat the boorish mistake of Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, whose visit to Israel last month was intended to lay

the groundwork for his prime minister's trip, but ended in diplomatic disaster, leaving a trail of bitterness and mistrust.

British and Israeli officials have since worked overtime to repair the damage caused by Cook's meeting with a Palestinian official at Har Homa — in violation of a prior agreement with Jerusalem — and the subsequent cancellation of a dinner in his honor by Prime Minister Netanyahu.

"We believe that much of the detritus has now been removed," said one official. "There will be no scope for unpleasant surprises on this trip."

Preparations for Blair's visit — via intense consultations with Israelis, Palestinians, European partners and, perhaps most significantly, with Washington — have been painstaking and meticulous to avoid a repetition of the Cook fiasco and to ensure maximum success for Blair. Unlike Cook, who passed up an invitation to visit Yad Vashem so he could lay a wreath in memory of the Arabs killed at Deir Yassin, the Holocaust memorial will be the first stop on Blair's itinerary when he and his wife, Cherie, arrive in Jerusalem on Sunday afternoon.

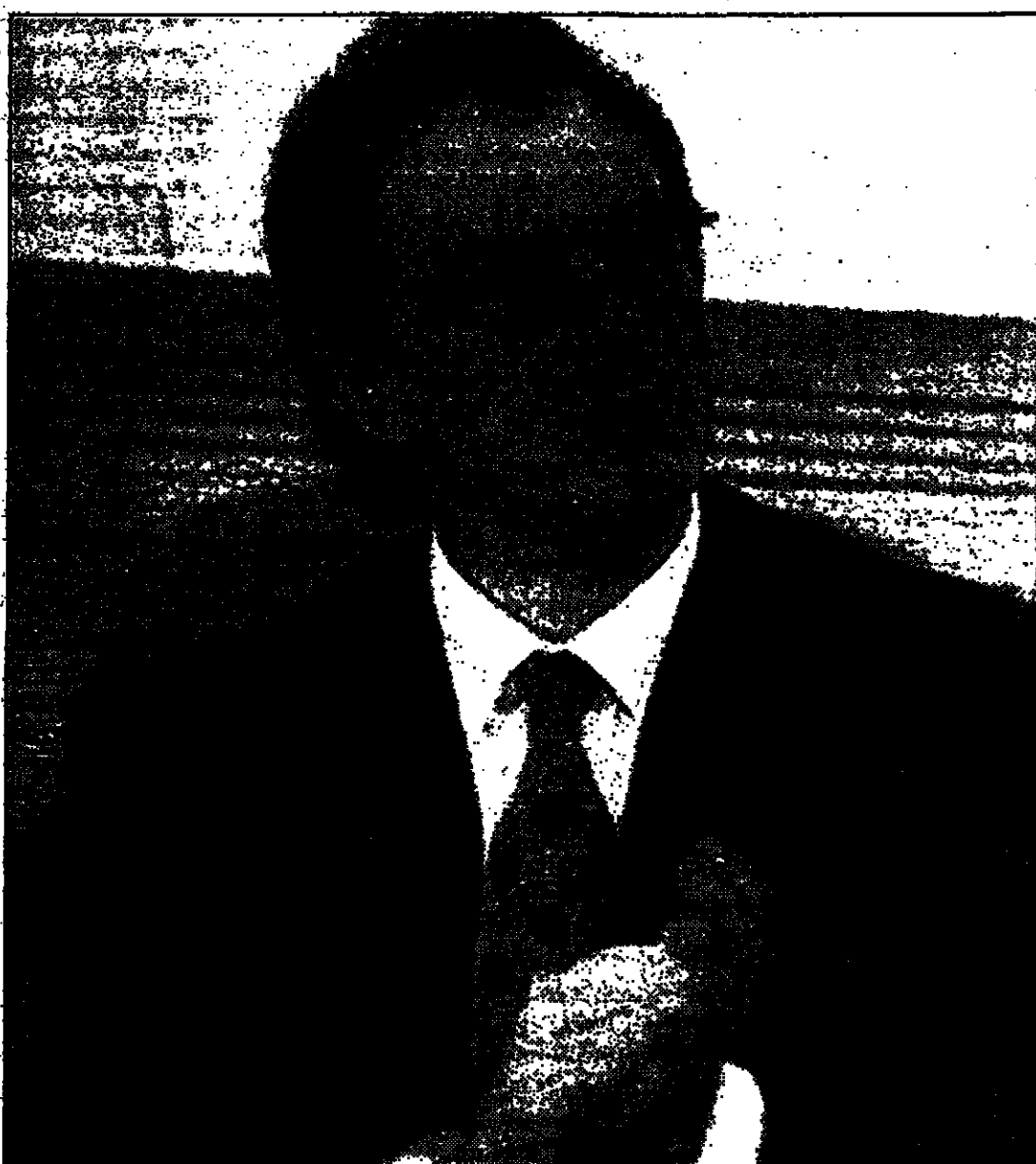
A proposal for Blair to spend a night in Gaza — unprecedented for a national leader — was triumphantly, and prematurely, leaked by a senior Palestinian official in London. After protests from Israel, the plan was quietly shelved and Blair's visit to Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat will be strictly a day trip (he will spend one night in Jerusalem and another in Tel Aviv).

Blair, who has been uninhibited and unequivocal about hitching his foreign policy wagon to the US (allowing Britain to "punch above its weight" diplomatically), has also drawn on the advice and counsel of State Department peace coordinator Dennis Ross, who visited London last week to brief officials at the Foreign Office on potentially fruitful areas for Blair to mine.

While Cook appeared determined to provoke a confrontation, Blair will be seeking conciliation. While Cook comes from a tradition of knee-jerk sympathy to Israel, the profoundly religious Blair is a visceral ally. Blair's personal political campaign was

In his first visit to Israel as prime minister, it will take all of Blair's charm and steel will to convince Binyamin Netanyahu that Europe can be trusted to be an evenhanded player in the peace process.

Douglas Davis reports from London



Tony Blair does not intend to repeat the boorish behavior of Foreign Secretary Robin Cook, but that doesn't mean he won't be tough.

and after the election, to court the electorally insignificant Jewish community, with whom he appears to have developed a genuine empathy.

"How wonderful it is to be among friends," were his opening words at a dinner in his honor by a pro-Israel lobby last December. He was, said a longtime Blair-watcher, "speaking

from the heart."

One of the "proudest achievements" of his revolutionized New Labor Party, Blair told his pro-Israel hosts, is that it is no longer considered politically incorrect to be a friend of Israel.

Netanyahu will also have been heartened to hear Blair's outspoken conviction that the phrase "peace with security" is "not a

slogan of extremism, but a basic right of a people that has not known real security all its days."

In an interview with the Arabic-language daily *al-Hayar*, which was intended to balance the books, Blair refused to be drawn into blaming Netanyahu for the lack of progress in the peace process.

"I do not think it would be wise for a prime minister to start apportioning blame at a time when negotiations are already at a very sensitive stage," he said. "If we are to make progress in the peace process, it is important to avoid a climate of blame and mutual recrimination."

The key principles are that all sides should adhere fully and unconditionally to the commitments they have made and that they should approach the negotiating process in a spirit of good faith and mutual respect," he stated in the article.

"For the Palestinians, this means, in particular, maximum and sustained effort in combating terrorism. There can be no justification for the scenes of carnage which we witnessed on the streets of Jerusalem last summer. Such attacks represent a moral outrage and a human tragedy. They also damage confidence among Israelis and make progress in the peace process more difficult."

But neither Netanyahu nor Arafat can expect an easy time when Blair comes calling. Heading his agenda will be a clutch of well-rehearsed issues: Palestinian security arrangements, the removal of obstacles to Palestinian economic development, further Israeli redeployments, a settlement freeze, the opening of the Karni industrial park, the establishment of a Gaza airport and the creation of "safe passage" routes between Gaza and Palestinian-controlled areas in the West Bank.

The tangible results of the visit, according to those who have been close to the intense negotiations that have preceded it, are likely to be a commitment to fund the Karni park and the adoption of Netanyahu's suggestion last week for Britain to combine its technical know-how with European funding to build a safe-passage tunnel or overpass for the Palestinians.

But Blair's ambitions during his two days in Israel and Gaza will transcend attempts to resolve at least some of the technical details that are outstanding from the Hebron and interim agreements.

The European Union perceives its \$1.8 billion contribution to the Palestinian Authority over the past five years as threatened by

the stalemate in the peace process, and it is now seeking to protect its investment by claiming a seat, alongside the US, at the center of peace diplomacy, where it will be able to translate its economic muscle into political clout.

It will take all of Tony Blair's considerable diplomatic skills and persuasive powers to convince Netanyahu that Europe can be trusted to be an evenhanded, positive force for genuine progress. But, again, achieving miracles has become Blair's stock in trade.

While acknowledging Israel's predicament and endorsing the dictum of "peace with security," Blair is no Likudnik. Still, there might be just enough chemistry on both sides — and just enough perception of mutual advantage — to contemplate the possibility of a deeper relationship between Blair and Netanyahu.

In a curious way (whisper it not to British officials), there is more than a passing similarity between the two men — in style, if not in substance. Blair and Netanyahu represent a new breed of pragmatic, young political leader. Both exert enormous personal power and both have surrounded themselves with aides who, though unelected, exercise considerable influence in their own right. Both leaders regard themselves as masters, rather than servants, of their parties, which both perceive as vehicles for their own brand of governance. And both have a certain impatience for the parliamentary process.

Beneath the engaging smiles and prepared sound bites are two highly focused leaders who know exactly where they are going and how they are going to get there, even if they remain, as both do, essentially enigmatic to their constituents.

But there is one critical difference in their personal styles: While Netanyahu apparently stands aloof, giving his critics a free ride, Blair has been an assiduous practitioner of "inclusiveness," a byword of his administration. And he has demonstrated a prodigious talent for co-optation. It was no surprise, then, that he invited former political foe John Major to help him "sell" the framework agreement in Northern Ireland.

"Tony doesn't believe in having enemies," one of his close advisers said last week. "He simply forces them to be his friends." It is a lesson Netanyahu might learn — if indeed he does not become its victim — when Tony Blair brings his glitzy show to town on Sunday.

Where to eat in Israel

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EUCALYPTUS — The taste of Israel from Biblical Days. Excellent meat, fish & vegetarian dishes enhanced by a masterful use of herbs and spices. Luncheon specials. Evening entertainment. Rave reviews. Kasher. 7 Horkanos St. Tel. 02-624 4331.

KOHINOOR Kasher Indian Restaurant — Kashrut supervision by Rabbi Yosef Fink. Buffet lunch NIS 49 (children NIS 25) Open 12-4 p.m.; 6 p.m.-midnight. Holiday Inn Hotel, The Crown Plaza. Tel. 02-658 8867, Tel/Fax: 02-653 6667.

LITTLE JERUSALEM — The Ticho House, Kasher Dairy & Fish. Open for breakfast, lunch, dinner. Delightful garden setting. Free entrance to the famous Anna Ticho Museum. Live Jazz Tuesday evenings. 9 HaRav Kook St. Tel. 02-624 4186.

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Poised for power

Walk into coalition chairman Meir Sheerit's elegant and spacious home in Yavne, and the first, overwhelming impression is that this is a family that likes flowers — a lot of flowers.

There are three bouquets on the dining room table, and a couple in the living room. There are flowers in the corridor, and bouquets in the den. These are not just a few long stemmed carnations bought at some roadside stand to decorate the house for Pesach. These are serious looking flowers; flower-shop-looking flowers; expensive-looking flowers.

"You should have seen the house last week," Sheerit says, explaining why his home is in bloom. Pointing to his living room, which is so big that a white upright piano at one side seems to take up no room at all, he adds:

"This whole area was full of bouquets. We had to get rid of them. They came from all over the country."

The florists started ringing the Sheerit doorbell soon after the Jerusalem District Court acquitted the Likud faction whip of fraud last week. "Even Rafi Peled sent some flowers," Sheerit says, referring to the former police inspector-general.

"I said after the verdict was read that a heavy burden has been lifted from my shoulders," the MK says, stating the very obvious. The acquittal, he has made clear since, has also removed a mighty barrier that was keeping him from taking up what he feels is his rightful place among the Likud top brass.

"I KNEW that while I was in the middle of the legal process I could not be a cabinet minister, or deputy minister," Sheerit says. "Not that it was forbidden by law — but it is not something that would hold up in a High Court appeal."

"But now everything is open. If there is another Likud appointment to the cabinet, I don't see how Bibi [Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu] can pass me over. I am one of the most veteran [Likud] MKs in the house, outside [Tourism Minister Moshe] Katsav and [Jerusalem Mayor Ehud] Olmert."

Sheerit maintains that from all vantage points — seniority, experience, accomplishments in public service — he is "a number of grades above" all the Likud cabinet ministers.

"I was mayor in Yavne in 1973, and built the city from almost nothing. I was in government before the Likud was in government," he says, letting out a roaring laugh.

In the short term, Sheerit, 49, has his designs set on the foreign ministry. In the long term, after Netanyahu leaves the stage, he sees himself as running for prime minister. He made a brief challenge for the Likud leadership in 1993, but dropped out of the race well before the primaries.

Sheerit, who became a mayor at 24 and an MK at 31, has never been accused of being short on ambition.

Buoyed after his acquittal on fraud charges, coalition whip Meir Sheerit now sees his way open to being first foreign minister, then premier. Herb Keiron interviews him

Now, thanks to Judge Michaela Sidlovsky-Om's decision, his ambition has ample room to roam.

SHEERIT was indicted in 1994 on suspicion of defrauding the Jewish Agency, where he served as treasurer from 1988 to 1992, of \$20,000. He had been accused of using a business credit card for personal purchases and of treating his family to a trip abroad at the agency's expense.

Immediately after his investigation began, Sheerit voluntarily decided to lift his Knesset immunity and face the charges.

"I realized immediately that the only road I could travel was to go directly to court. All other roads

takes a long time, costs a lot of money, damages the person's name and punishes the public figure from day one. I've remained outside the government until today because of this," he says. "It cannot be fixed retroactively," he adds.

Sheerit charges that his investigation was politically inspired by Labor higher-ups concerned that he would win the Histadrut elections in 1993. In the end he didn't run, because Netanyahu opted for another candidate, Ya'acov Shamai.

This time around Netanyahu was interested in having Sheerit run against Histadrut Chairman Amir Peretz and Maxim Levy in the June union elections, but Sheerit declined.

'If Bibi wants a spokesman who can show the world that the Likud is interested in peace, I am the answer. I have a good name in the world, and among the Arabs'

would leave me tarnished. If I used Knesset immunity, or if I went to a special hearing with the attorney-general, someone would always say there was a case against me, and that, for some reason, it was closed. Only an acquittal would remove all doubt."

With his acquittal Sheerit joins a long list of public figures — most recently MK Avi Yehzekel (Labor), Olmert, and Finance Minister Yaakov Neeman — who have had charges against them thrown out by the courts.

"I don't want to harm the judicial system," Sheerit says, "but when dealing with public personalities — and a public figure's good name is the most important asset he has — there has to be a better balance."

"Public figures are punished the first day their names appear in the paper and it says that the police have begun investigating; ordinary citizens' punishment only begins if they are found guilty in court. The system needs to check over and over before it indicts a public figure."

Sheerit accuses the state attorney's office of being "trigger-happy" when it comes to public figures. It tries to make its life easier by indicting on police recommendations, in an effort to avoid having to explain to the press or the High Court why they haven't indicted.

But, Sheerit says, "letting the courts deal with something like this

"What do I need it for?" he asks. "It is a dying animal." Besides, he repeats, he feels ready for bigger and greener pastures — like the foreign ministry.

On the surface, Sheerit, considered one of Likud's leading doves, seems the last person Netanyahu would be interested in as foreign minister. Why, with his government constantly under attack from the Right, would the prime minister want to select for the high-profile ministry a moderate who did not vote against the Oslo accords, and who has said that he does not rule out the establishment of a Palestinian state?

"A moderate is exactly what Bibi needs," Sheerit says. "If he wants a spokesman who can show the world that the Likud is interested in peace, and that the negotiations are serious, then I am the answer. I have a good name in the world, and among the Arabs."

While Sheerit speaks, a daughter of elementary school age, one of his two children, comes to sit on a sofa for a few minutes to listen. A third child, Miri, died of cancer in 1993.

Her picture is featured prominently on a living room wall. Pointing at it, Sheerit says a ministerial position is not the most important thing in his life.

If Netanyahu is indeed considering Sheerit for the job David

Levy vacated in a huff in January, there would be more than just a little irony involved. In 1993, Sheerit says, Netanyahu was in favor of expelling him. Ronni Milo and Assad Assad for bucking party discipline and abstaining in the Knesset vote on Oslo.

"In the last Knesset they wanted to throw me out of Likud because of Oslo. And look at me today, chairman of the coalition. More than that, Likud has gone ahead with Oslo," Sheerit says. "I said back then that it should."

"I said back then that if Likud does not support Oslo and the peace process, it has no chance of regaining power. They objected, objected and objected — until the elections, when all Likud surveys showed that I was 100 percent correct, and that the Likud had no chance if it didn't say it would continue with Oslo."

Three months before the election Bibi made his announcement that he would continue with the process.

Today, Sheerit says, he and Netanyahu see pretty much eye to eye on Oslo — something that should concern the coalition's right wing, since Sheerit has come out publicly in favor of the Likud backing a Palestinian state.

"I do not rule out the possibility of a Palestinian state," Sheerit says, repeating comments that caused a stir when first uttered in November.

"If the Palestinians hold up their end of the accords, I am not against it. My opinion is that if we sit and do nothing a Palestinian state will likely be established under the worst conditions for us. Better to come to an agreement with them under better terms for us."

Least the Palestinian leadership find too much comfort in Sheerit's words, he adds: "A state should not be taken for granted. They will have to give up on Jerusalem and agree on territorial compromise in Judea and Samaria, since we will not go back to the 1967 borders, agree to a buffer zone along the Jordan and to demilitarization," he says.

ACCORDING to Sheerit, who claims to be in contact with the Palestinian leadership, "Palestinian attitudes towards Netanyahu are changing. When they believed that Bibi would fall, they did not agree to move at all in the peace process — they are the ones responsible for stalling the talks. But now they even understand that Bibi is not going to fall. It is now impossible to topple him. Labor has given up, they are giving up, and their tone is changing."

Sheerit says that Palestinian acceptance of the American proposal of a 13-percent withdrawal is an indication that they are becoming more flexible.

"The accords will not fall over 10, 11, 12 or 13%. A percent here or there is not significant. The question is whether they will fulfill their obligations. Bibi has already said that if the Palestinians fulfill their obligations, no coalition will keep him from carrying out the second redeployment stage."

Sheerit does not take too seriously threats by the Land of Israel Front to topple the government if Netanyahu goes ahead with a double-digit second stage withdrawal.

"The Land of Israel Front can't do anything. We don't need their support. If the Palestinians reach an agreement with Bibi, there will be an absolute majority in the Knesset for it without the Right, because the Left will support it. So what will the Land of Israel Front do, topple Bibi?"

Sheerit is sure that the opposition will vote for any agreement with the Palestinians, although they may join a no-confidence motion presented by the Right a week or so later.

But in that case, he says, the government would not be collapsing because of a failure to make peace — in which case its stock in the public would only rise.

"If they topple us because we went ahead with the Palestinians we would return to power with double the strength," he says.

Having said all that, and having exuded the complete and utter confidence that he knows how to project, Sheerit then says that it is time to push for a national unity government.

Why bring Labor and Ehud Barak onto center stage if he is so



Is he really head and shoulders above the rest of the Likud? Sheerit is triumphantly carried out of court following his acquittal last week.

(Ariel Jozanowski)

sure the government can fend off a coalition threat without them?

"If Labor went into a broad government with us the peace agreement would really have a national consensus," he replies. "An agreement will entail Israeli concessions, difficult decisions. The more we are able to face the Palestinians as a united front, the easier it will be to reach an agreement, because they won't be waiting for another alternative."

An additional benefit to a unity government, he says, is that it would neutralize the demands of small parties. Although he is reluctant to single out the haredi parties, it is clear that he has their demands very much in mind.

"If you look at the budget in many areas, you see that a lot of money went to areas that are not considered national objectives. All governments pay prices to the small parties. But with a national unity government, where you don't need the small parties, you can allocate those funds elsewhere, and set a new national policy agenda," Sheerit says.

While many point to the Peres-Shamir unity governments as failed enterprises, Sheerit says they achieved a lot.

"Look, they took the IDF out of Lebanon, brought down inflation from 400% to normal levels, and were able to enact a number of correct economic moves. Where

they didn't succeed was in personal relations."

Netanyahu and Barak would stand to have better luck at striking a good personal relationship than Shamir and Peres did, Sheerit says, because "they don't have the deep-seated animosity of the revisionist vs. the socialist camps. Both of them are my age — how much hatred can there be? Believe me, if there is an understanding on national unity, everything between them will be resolved quickly."

WHILE dreaming of a broad-based coalition and trying to pull some strings behind the scenes to bring it about, Sheerit is stuck heading what he says is the most difficult coalition ever assembled.

"You have built-in conflicts," he says. "What the haredi parties want contradicts what Yisrael Ba'aliya wants, and what the Third Way wants contradicts what the National Religious Party wants."

Nevertheless, he says, the coalition has hit a certain comfortable stride. "Bibi has learned over the last two years," Sheerit says. "There is no shame in admitting that, and he himself has said it."

"As a new prime minister, he didn't know how to run a government. All of a sudden he becomes prime minister and the world is on his back. He didn't know who was to his left, and who to his right."

"He didn't rely on people, was afraid to consult with them, and was dependent on a small group of people who, on more than one

occasion, gave him bad advice. "But he has learned from his mistakes. He consults more, hears more opinions before he decides, listens to more MKs and ministers."

Sheerit takes more than just a little credit for this, saying that since he became faction chairman last year, Netanyahu has held weekly meetings with Likud ministers and coalition party heads.

The meetings, he says, have enhanced coordination — something that was not at a premium during "the first year of Netanyahu's tenure."




While eager to take credit for the improvement, Sheerit deflects blame for the defection of Geshet MKs from the coalition, even though they bolted under his watch.

"They were wrong, and they made a mistake," Sheerit says with complete certainty. "In the end we agreed to what they wanted, but they still decided to leave."

Paradoxically, according to Sheerit, the coalition is running more smoothly now, five seats smaller than when Geshet was a member.

"When the coalition became smaller, everybody understood that they had direct responsibility for the coalition's future. When there are a couple of people who create problems, it gives others the opportunity to create problems. But now if anyone makes a mess, the government will fall."

"Believe me, none of the parties wants to go to elections today, because none of them — none of them — is sure about how it would do at the polls."

Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day 1998
PROGRAM OF EVENTS AT YAD VASHEM

The Eve of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day
Wednesday April 22 1998

20:00	The opening ceremony of Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day, in the presence of President Ezer Weizman and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Warsaw Ghetto Square
22:00	"The State of Israel and the Holocaust" — symposium with Prof. Yisrael Gutman, journalist Dan Margalit, Prof. Avi Ravitzky and Prof. Amnon Rubinstein MK, Auditorium

Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance Day
Thursday April 23 1998

10:00	Siren
10:02	Wreath-laying ceremony with the participation of the President, government representatives, the Speaker of the Knesset, the Chairman of the Jewish Agency, the Chief of the General Staff, the Chief of Police, the Dean of the Diplomatic Corps, the Mayor of Jerusalem, public figures, survivors' organizations, school children and delegations from all over the country, Warsaw Ghetto Square
10:30-12:30	"Unto Every Person There is a Name" — recitation of names of Holocaust victims by members of the public, Hall of Remembrance
10:30-16:00	Continuous screening of films on the Holocaust, Auditorium
13:00	Main memorial ceremony, Hall of Remembrance
17:30	Ceremony for youth movements and soldiers, in conjunction with the Israel Information Center, the Youth Authority, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, and the Youth Movement Council, in the presence of the Deputy Minister of Education, Culture and Sport Moshe Peled MK, Warsaw Ghetto Square


Additional information
On Remembrance Day Eve, Wednesday April 22 1998, Yad Vashem will be open to the public from 08:00 until 13:00. At 17:30, invitees to the opening ceremony will be admitted to the site.
At 21:30, the public is invited to attend the symposium in the Auditorium.
On Remembrance Day, Thursday April 23 1998, Yad Vashem will be open to the public from 08:00 until 20:00. Private vehicles will not be admitted to Yad Vashem on Remembrance Day Eve or on Remembrance Day itself. Parking facilities are available on Mt. Herzl.
Transportation from Mt. Herzl to Yad Vashem will be available to the public for all Remembrance Day events.
The public is invited to visit two exhibitions currently on display in the Art Museum:
"The Last Ghetto-Life in the Lodz Ghetto"
"No Child's Play: Children in the Holocaust — Creativity and Play"

No firearms allowed

All events are open to the public

Please bring your invitation to the opening ceremony. Invitations may be obtained from the Public Relations and Commemoration Department, Tel 02-6751614.

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In a touching picture of brigade commander Yitzhak Rabin with Yigal Allon, Rabin holds his hat out as if modestly telling the photographer not to bother.

An extraordinary epoch

50

Fifty years after the Palmah Harel Brigade helped save the city of Jerusalem, the story of its men and women is retold in a photo exhibit that makes their courage and spirit come to life. Aryeh Dean Cohen tours it with writer Haim Hefer

The couple in the picture stand defiantly in their makeshift mountain guard post, the woman's gun pointed straight at the enemy who is expected at any moment. They have practically no protection, no helmets, and no real uniforms.

Alone awaiting their fate, they appear tremendously vulnerable, yet calm in the face of battle as they stand side by side in the Judean Hills. They are part of what one of their comrades will later call "an epoch of heroism."

Fifty years after that moment was captured on film and half a century after Palmah Harel Brigade defenders like them helped save the city of Jerusalem, their story is being retold in the very capital that meant so much to them.

Liberating Jerusalem - Palmah Harel, a photograph exhibit at the House of David Museum of the History of Jerusalem, tells the story through pictures and documents of the 1,600 members of the Harel Brigade, the first force to be conscripted in the War of Independence and summoned to the aid of the besieged capital.

It is a way for the city that owes them so much to say thanks - but also a mirror allowing us to see the individuals, spirit and courage of the Harel Brigade.

Viewing the exhibit is the best kind of history lesson, allowing visitors a more personal glimpse of events and figures they may only have read about. This reporter toured it recently with writer Haim Hefer, who led the unit's entertainment troupe - the first ever in the IDF - and provided the captions for the pictures. The photographs tell the story of a group of men and women who were both ordinary and extraordinary.

THE BRIGADE was established at the end of 1947 by the Palmah and put under the command of a young Yitzhak Rabin. One of its first assignments was to participate in the Nahshon Campaign in the spring of 1948, aimed at clearing the hills around Jerusalem of marauding Arabs who made it impossible for food, ammunition and arms to reach Jerusalem.

"The situation there was terrible," Hefer recalled. "Most of the population, about 100,000 Jews, were desperate. They thought the end of the world was coming." Indeed, the pictures show just that.

In one, three young girls in pretty dresses try to look natural. One has her hands placed on her sister's shoulders as if to steady her nerves, as they stand in their courtyard piled high with sandbags.

In another, a woman puts a pacifier in a baby's mouth while her friend bounces a toddler on her lap as they sit in a sandbagged room. Water cisterns had run dry, as evidenced by pictures of Jerusalemites, Jews and Arabs walking on line with jerry cans for water to be delivered, despite threats of shelling.

They viewed the brigade members as their personal saviors, and Hefer remembers being showered with candy when his troupe arrived one day in Mahaneh Yehuda, even though these peo-

ple didn't even have sugar to put in their coffee.

Thrown into the fray to keep the roads open throughout the country, the Harel Brigade was poorly trained - if at all. One picture shows pre-battle training: four soldiers holding a rifle horizontally to support a fifth soldier, who could then be pulled by others above him into what looks like a Tel Aviv apartment building window.

"The training went on during the fighting," Hefer said. "The arms we had were the Czech rifles sent over as the last minute by ship. Then there was the Sten gun, which was more public relations than weapon."

It was a rag tag army, making do with what it had - few soldiers had matching uniforms, let alone hats. Even commanders in the pictures

It was a rag tag army, making do with what it had - few soldiers had matching uniforms, let alone hats

wear differing gear, and certainly no epaulettes. They frowned on formality. When an American shipment of baseball-style hats arrived, they were derisively called *hitekmachers*, or *hatmakers*, and were scorned by most of the soldiers, Hefer said.

THEY WERE a curious mixture of men and women, sabra and refugee. The women played a tremendous role in the brigade, explained Hefer, who still refers to his former comrades as "boys" and "girls."

"Most of the girls wanted equality, and they fought," he said. "They wanted to show that they weren't any less important or less fighters than the men. When I joined the unit, we had two companies of men and one of women."

The women certainly stand out in the photographs: One poses alongside a man, two hand grenades in her belt, proudly gripping a Sten gun. "She could throw a grenade 25 meters," Hefer said.

Some of the women are shown at the wheels of jeeps - like Rabin's personal driver, who could swear with the best of them, Hefer said. Others participated in the most dangerous field operations, despite occasional opposition from home.

"One woman from a Sephardi background told me her parents didn't talk to her for a year after she joined up," Hefer recalled.

Their bravery was displayed daily. Hefer recalled one woman, now a botanist at Kibbutz Kabri, wounded at Nebi Samwil in an aborted morning raid.

"It took two hours until they found her. She asked the paramedics not to take off her pants because the blood had already coagulated. Some boy took her out of the battle zone, and she said: 'Leave me, otherwise they will kill you too.' She was saved, as was another woman left to defend a group of wounded soldiers in Bab el-Wad after another operation."

"They left her with a hand grenade and a pair of scissors," Hefer recalled, "and she decided that if they were attacked she would first stab the wounded so as not to let them fall into enemy hands, then blow herself up with the hand grenade. Fortunately that wasn't necessary."

The women proved useful in other ways. British soldiers were too polite to bother searching them when they came through on convoys, so the women were able to hide parts of Sten guns in their clothes.

Many of the soldiers were refugees only recently arrived from abroad - like one very Polish-looking fellow posing among a group of five soldiers alongside a male piled high with jerry cans of water.

"Many of them were [Holocaust] survivors," Hefer said. "You could have a platoon commander who had fought with the partisans in the forests of Lithuania. That was the first time they felt they were equal to the sabras. One time they would save a sabra, another time a sabra would save them. The war brought them together."

BUT THEIR Holocaust experiences could make their Harel experiences more difficult.

The exhibit includes a picture of a mournful-looking soldier just hours after a difficult battle for the San Simon Monastery - one of many battles the brigade fought in or around Jerusalem in 1948 - where there were many wounded.

"They put them down in the cellar on mattresses," Hefer remembered, "and when they thought they would have to retreat from the monastery, commander Uri Ben-Ari called over a paramedic and said: 'Find out which of the wounded can walk, and which can't. We'll put explosives under those who can't walk.'"

"The boy made the choice, and later, when we won the battle, and didn't have to blow them up, he came to Ben-Ari and said: 'I am one who survived the selection in Auschwitz, and I had to do the selection again.'"

"It was a terrible choice for him, because he remembered."

Try as they might, however, the refugees were not always successful in blending in, much like the Nikolai Rappaports of today's IDF.

Hefer recalled how he referred to his unit as "the elite."

"What elite?" asked a refugee comrade, who wrote to him explaining how when packages from the Joint Distribution Committee were distributed to the soldiers, all he ended up with was a writing tablet - but he had no one to write to. Hefer subsequently helped establish centers for

refugee soldiers in Tel Aviv.

Daily life mixed bravery with exhaustion. The commando unit fought mostly at night, but its members were always aware they might not return from the front.

Four hundred members of the brigade are buried at the Kiryat Anavim cemetery, where during the day soldiers and kibbutz members would estimate how many might fall that night, preparing graves in advance.

"I don't know any other army in the world where they did such a thing," Hefer says. "It was terrible. You knew it was a matter of life and death."

The soldiers played macabre games to pass the time, putting a napkin on top of a glass and a coin in the middle of the napkin. Each soldier then put his cigarette on the glass, "and the one whose cigarette made the coin fall through thought, 'I'm going to be next.'"

SLEEP WAS a welcome escape from the horrors of battle, as depicted in one photograph. It shows a soldier, his gun at his side, his boots in a corner and his face covered with a towel, trying to catch a few moments' rest.

Not even Ben-Gurion himself was more important than sleep. "One day they came back after a tough battle and they had this huge radio, and on the radio Rabin suddenly heard Ben-Gurion declaring the establishment of the State of Israel," Hefer recalled. "So he called to the boys and said: 'Listen, Ben-Gurion is making a speech proclaiming the establishment of the state of Israel.' One of the boys said: 'Shut off the radio, we want to sleep.'"

The exhibit includes photographs reflecting the unit's triumphs and tragedies: the victory at the monastery, the tragic massacre at Nebi Daniel, in which seven soldiers blew themselves up rather than surrender to Arabs who blocked the road from Gush Etzion to Bethlehem after the British confiscated soldiers' weapons; the struggle to free Ramat Rahel, and the fighting around the Old City.

There is an extensive segment on the Burma Road, created after a handful of Palmah officers decided one day to try to navigate a passage between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem that bypassed the cut-off asphalt road.

They shocked Ben-Gurion with their story when they arrived, thereby setting the road's construction, and the rescue of besieged Jerusalem, in motion.

There is a map made by the British, on which the route for the convoys to the capital is marked, and a timetable for the convoy to keep to along the 11 stations from Latrun to Ramat. Pictures of the "sandwich" and "butterfly" armored cars - the latter so called because of the wing-like openings at the top - which today pay homage to the brigade along the Jerusalem-Tel Aviv highway are also featured.

ONE MOVING photograph shows a group of bearded Bukharan Jews from Jerusalem, wearing peaked caps and carrying pickaxes and shovels over their shoulders as they show up to help work on the road that would be their salvation.

On the other side, Tel Aviv residents were recruited to carry bags of supplies over the rocky patches that had not yet been paved. "Many of them will tell you that was the proudest moment of their lives," Hefer said.

Original battle plans are also displayed, as is a lovely picture of commander Yitzhak Rabin and Yigal Allon. Rabin's palm is stretched out, as if modestly ask-



Pre-battle training: Four soldiers hold a rifle horizontally, enabling a fifth soldier to stand on and be pulled into an apartment building window above.



The women wanted to show they were as important as the men: Some, like this one, are shown at the wheels of jeeps, while others took part in highly dangerous field operations.

ing the photographer not to bother.

Even then he was asked for greatness, Hefer, a good friend, said. "When you see a battle order by Rabin, even then you knew he was going to be chief of staff. It was exact, minimizing all the risks."

Just how difficult was the task faced by Rabin and other Harel commanders like Moshe Tabenkin is seen in a shot of a group of commanders consulting a blackboard full of numbers, indicating how many weapons and men were at their disposal, how many wounded they had. Hefer's caption says it all: "Imagine you are Napoleon and these are all the weapons you have."

Most of the pictures came from Palmah archives or from Yad Tabenkin, curator Nissan Perez explained, and most are on show for the first time. The exhibition is being mounted to mark the nation's 50th anniversary, at the initiative of the Association of Palmah Veterans, and in cooperation with the municipality's culture department. It will run until May 15, the anniversary of the founding of the Palmah, which museum officials say will be many years in the making.

Hefer said he hopes visitors, especially younger ones, "will grasp that something important happened. They'll see what the

atmosphere was like at the time and want to know more."

He said the army's not the same today; there's less motivation except among soldiers in Lebanon. There's also something missing in Israeli society today, something that made the Harel Brigade's efforts possible, Hefer added.

The veteran songwriter, a witness to what he calls "the best of days and the worst of days," finds the answer in the songs of the time periods.

"In the time of the Palmah," he said, "the songs were all about 'we.' Now the songs are about 'I.' That's the whole story."

The hidden persuaders

The Irish peace process blew into the Sheraton Hotel in New York on a chilly April breeze six years ago, and nobody noticed.

The presidential hopeful from Arkansas, governor Bill Clinton, was persuaded to spare a few minutes for a small group of Irish Americans, mainly because his rival in the Democratic primaries, Jerry Brown, had agreed to turn up.

In presidential primaries, no one rejects an invitation that has even a hint of seriousness, if it comes from the Jews or the Irish of New York.

It was Clinton the Irish really wanted - Brown was a decoy. Clinton was on a losing streak in early '92, but the word was out in the Irish community that this unlikely hick from Arkansas was serious business on ethnic issues and already had the Jewish community in the bag. They wanted him on the record about Ireland at an early stage, just in case.

They got more than they expected from that brief Sheraton appearance - a scene brilliantly documented in *The Greening of the White House*, by Conor O'Clery (Gill & Macmillan, 1996). They got a promise from Clinton that if he made it to the White House, he would send a special peace envoy to Northern Ireland.

"I think we have been too reluctant to engage ourselves in a positive way because of our longstanding special relationship with Britain," Clinton explained.

It might have been taken as a mild bit of electioneering blarney. It wasn't - Clinton was no Dan Quayle, he really knew his Irish potatoes. When he was a Rhodes scholar at Oxford, he had taken a keen interest in the 1968 outbreak of "the troubles" - the civil rights campaign by Catholics in Northern Ireland which led to all-out sectarian warfare. He had even crossed over to Dublin for a week-end visiting the famous pubs.

CLINTON knew exactly what it meant to slip a thin wedge into the cast-iron British policy that declared Northern Ireland to be an internal and domestic problem.

The furious British Conservative government of John Major was later to make the silly mistake of allowing party advisers to work for Clinton's Republican opponents. The advisers suggested using a poster of Jennifer Flowers with the caption "...and now he wants to screw the whole country."

Some brilliant Irish and Irish-American diplomacy lies behind the historic agreement over Northern Ireland. Thomas O'Dwyer traces its steps



Last Friday in the Oval Office, after nurturing peace talks in Northern Ireland through the night from afar, President Clinton praised the accord as "the best chance for peace in a generation." (AP)

Wrong answer! Paul O'Dwyer, the curmudgeonly and aged guru of the New York Irish, growled that in the 70 years since he had left County Mayo he had never heard a politician who knew more about Ireland than Bill Clinton. It was the equivalent of an Irish canonization for the Democrat from Arkansas.

The Irish wheeler-dealers moved into action in the media and on the campaign and diplomatic trails. Tipperary-born Niall O'Dowd, a cheery raconteur and founder-publisher of the feisty New York Irish Voice and Irish America magazines, was seeking ways to get the American political process seriously engaged in the Northern Ireland problem.

Looking back, I am reminded of my first meeting with then-candi-

date Bill Clinton in 1991 in a New York hotel room long before he was a front runner for the presidency," wrote O'Dowd in an *Irish Times* column this week. "We had been searching for a presidential candidate for many years who would take the issue of Northern Ireland seriously. We had more hope than expectation that the obscure Southern governor would care an Arkansas catfish for our concerns. "We could not have been more wrong. Clinton met us alone and blew us away with his Irish knowledge," wrote O'Dowd. "Paul O'Dwyer turned to me as we left the room. 'If this guy gets elected everyone better watch out,' he said. Those were prophetic words."

WITH A pre-a-porter supply of

green ties and obscure Irish grandmothers, American presidential candidates have always viewed Irish Americans as ballot fodder - their passionate love of the old homeland an easy prey for glib tongues and political seduction.

The morning after, it was always different. Elected presidents soon abandoned Irish charms to go home to that British "special relationship," and the younger New York and Boston Irish were thoroughly sick of the Reagan-Thatcher and Bush-Major duets.

American policy-makers, weaned on the Cold War, like things simple. The bottom line on Ireland always was - some of our best ancestors were Irish. Northern Ireland is a pain in the butt, and we're again terrorism. No one, including the government in Dublin, would disagree.

Publisher O'Dowd was already teamed up with a friend in the Irish embassy in Washington - one Brendan Scannell (now serving as Ireland's first resident ambassador in Israel) who had many friends in the US Congress. Scannell apparently shared O'Dowd's reckoning that the Bush administration was a lost cause on Ireland and that the Clinton bandwagon was the way to go.

After discussions with O'Dowd, Clinton's ethnic affairs campaign organizer Chris Hyland helped set up the Irish Americans for Clinton peace lobby, chaired by former Congressman Bruce Morrison.

It was an amazingly simple idea copied from other ethnic-Americans for Clinton groups already in place. As such, it became the natural address for what was virtually the Clinton manifesto on Northern Ireland, which the candidate put in a letter only two weeks before the '92 election.

The letter was drafted on Clinton's orders by another key

Irish lobbyist, Nancy Soderberg, a former aide to Senator Edward Kennedy. That letter went further than any president had ever dared go on Northern Ireland.

With hindsight, the Clinton policy statement was a brilliant blueprint for what happened in Belfast this week under the chairmanship of former US Senator George Mitchell. As cited in O'Clery's book, Clinton wrote: "A permanent and peaceful solution to the crisis in Northern Ireland can only be achieved if the underlying cause of the strife and instability is dealt with vigorously, fairly and within a time frame that guarantees genuine, substantial and steady progress... I believe the appointment of a special US envoy to Northern Ireland could be a catalyst in the effort to secure a lasting peace."

He went on to slam the British government for not vigorously opposing job discrimination against Catholics, for "wanton use of lethal force" and "collusion between security forces and Protestant paramilitary groups."

The statement was a breath-stopper. It made traditional Irish Americans like Edward Kennedy gasp that it was counter-productive and would enrage London. That was putting it mildly.

The British Conservative advisers followed up their crude campaign advice to Republicans by delving into Clinton's student passport files in Britain looking for dirt to harm him - such as a rumored trip to Moscow.

But campaigning is one thing - ruling is another. After Clinton was elected and settled into office and more pressing controversies, members of the activist Irish camp became alarmed, thinking that they were about to fall victim once again to the use-them-and-lose-them rule of politicians and ethnic groups.

They need not have worried. There was a long and anguishing road ahead - an international row over the granting of a US visa to Gerry Adams, leader of the IRA's political wing, Sinn Féin; IRA cease-fires made and broken; the bungling of John Major.

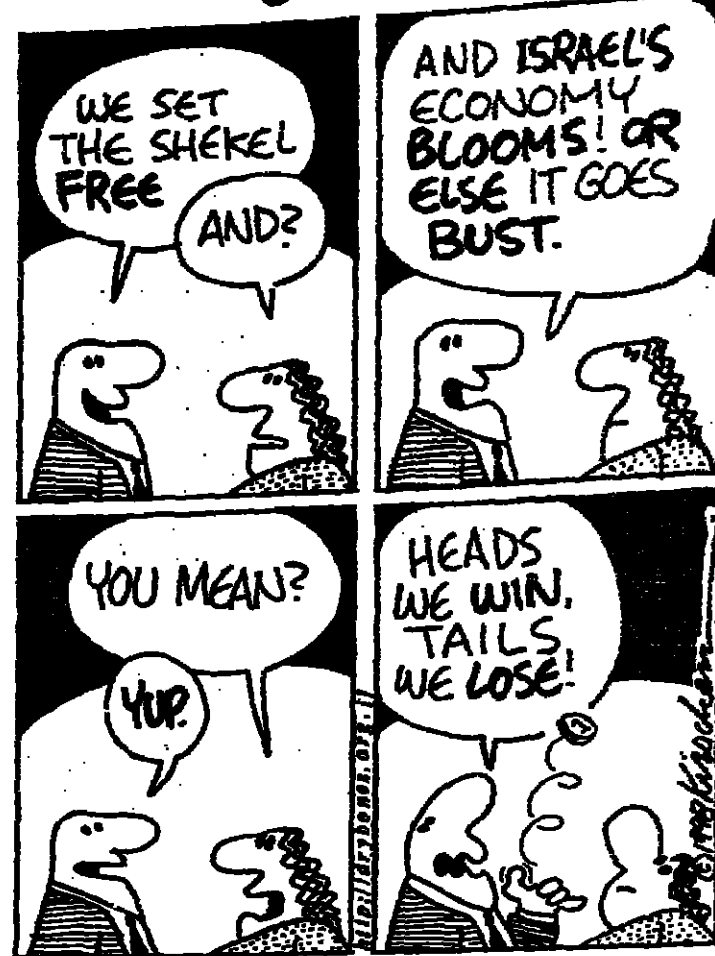
Finally, came the arrival on the scene of Prime Minister Tony Blair and this year's great leap forward in the peace negotiations which delivered last Easter Saturday's signed agreement. But the groundwork had been laid by the Irish getting their act together just in time, at the right time.

NIALL O'DOWD was the driving force behind turning the Irish lobby from ballot fodder to battle ready. Before Irish envoy Scannell left the US in 1993, first for a stint in Dublin, followed by assignment to Israel, he helped to set up a line to keep O'Dowd's peace campaign firmly linked to the Clinton White House. He impressed on O'Dowd the need to keep the presidency informed at all times on what was happening. Clinton does not like surprises - keeping his trust was vital.

Nancy Soderberg was now a staff director at the National Security Council - and a special adviser on Ireland. Access to her was set up via her Ireland expert successor at Edward Kennedy's office - Trina Vargo. Taking the cautious Kennedy office on board a campaign that intended to bring the IRA and Protestant paramilitaries on board a US-chaired peace process could have been tricky to say the very least. But Scannell was as sure-footed as he was well connected.

See HIDDEN, Page 22

Dry Bones



GRAPEVINE

By GREEK FAY CASHMAN



A smiling Leash Rabin on her 70th with Tel Aviv Hilton manager Ronald van Weezel.

A frequent victim of the rumor mill, former prime minister Shimon Peres has usually chosen silence over comment on unfavorable gossip. And this week he stayed silent for nearly a whole year amid widespread rumors of his alleged romantic liaison with Israel's former consul-general to New York, Colette Avital. Gossip-mongers also contended that Peres had left his wife, Sonia, to whom he has been married for over 50 years, in order to take up residence with Avital, and there were veiled hints in the media about a well-protected public figure whose home is no longer guarded. Even then Peres said nothing, reportedly because his wife didn't want him to.

But, as *Yedioth Aharanot* reported on Monday, matters came to a head when someone asked Peres's daughter whether Avital was pregnant with his child. This week Peres appeared on television's Channel 2 to declare that there was as much truth in the rumor that he had left his wife as there had been in an earlier rumor that his mother was an Arab.

Ironically, Sonia and Shimon Peres were dining at the home of *Yedioth Aharanot* social columnist Mira Avrech when she received a telephone call from a mutual acquaintance, who wanted her to confirm that Peres had left his wife. Avrech, who has been a close friend of the Peres family for some four decades, told the caller that the story was untrue and that Peres and his wife were at the moment sitting at her dining room table. The caller was incredulous and dissatisfied. It was, it seemed, too juicy a morsel to quash. Peres said on TV that the gossip emanated from "a high place," but declined to elaborate.

WHAT'S the worst thing that can happen to you on the eve of a major event? Michelle Mazel, the wife of Israel's ambassador to Egypt, had invited 125 guests to the Seder when her cook fell ill. Because of the stringent security around the ambassador's residence it was impossible to get a swift replacement, so Mazel, with the help of an American friend from Brooklyn, had no choice but to make the matza balls herself - 400 in total. "I never want to see another *insidel*," she said afterwards.

IS Haim Yavin coming back to anchor the *Mabat* news on Channel 1? Uri Porat, who next week takes up his post as director-general of the Broadcasting Authority, has his way. Yavin will return to his familiar stomping ground. Porat intends to make some sweeping personnel changes at ITV and has already tried to lure Yavin to rejoin Channel 1 - but whether Yavin is willing, and whether he can break free from his current contractual arrangement to a Channel 2 franchisee, is another ball game altogether. It was Porat, by the way, who during his previous stint as IBA director-general

promoted Yavin to head ITV.

WHAT a coincidence. When retired Swiss swimming pool manufacturer Ulrich Hartmann and his wife Marlis came to Israel for a four-day visit, they went to see the picnic and look-out site at Mitze Betar on the outskirts of Jerusalem which Hartmann's company had established in honor of his son Dr. Heinz Hartmann. They were somewhat appalled by the state of neglect and the disappearance of a bronze map of the area. While they were resting on one of the benches, they were befuddled by a group of picknickers from Jerusalem - Chana and Jonathan Sheink, Pessy and Neville Krausz, Blossom and Shlomo Rottlinger and Carole and Gay Golding, who invited the Hartmanns to join them for lunch. The Hartmanns said they had been trying to get hold of the Jewish National Fund's representative for Switzerland, but without result. As it happened, they didn't have far to look. The man lives in the same building as Pessy and Neville Krausz, who promised to deliver the message.

HER much-publicized 70th birthday party at the Savoy home of Hila and Ran Rahav was not the only event to mark Leash Rabin's seventh decade. Her birthday was also celebrated in conjunction with the screening of the Dutch documentary film *Warrior - Peace Maker - Yitzhak Rabin*, after which she was invited to a festive gathering at the Tel Aviv Hilton. In addition to a sumptuous birthday cake, hotel resident manager Ronald van Weezel presented Rabin with a set of silver wine accessories for Pessah.

THE Shlomo Carlebach marathon memorial concert started late, but by around 10 p.m. attendance had swelled to a couple of thousand. Carlebach's younger daughter Dafi made two stage appearances to share some of her father's Torah with his fans, and Rabbi Yankele Shamas, a veteran Carlebach disciple, announced the establishment of a Shlomo Carlebach Yeshiva in Jerusalem. Another Carlebach veteran, Benzion Solomon, singer and string instrumentalist, performed together with several of his sons, including Yehuda Solomon, lead singer with the Moshav Band, which has just completed a highly successful tour of the US and Canada.

WHEN Jerusalem mayor Ehud Olmert toured *The Jerusalem Post* Handicrafts Fair, he was waylaid by residents who wanted to shake his hand and wish him a happy holiday. But one person persisted in complaining about high rates and taxes, to which Olmert retorted: "Tel Aviv is much higher. Haifa is much higher. I'm not in the business of getting popular at any cost." An intriguing admission in an election year.

CRYPTIC CROSSWORD

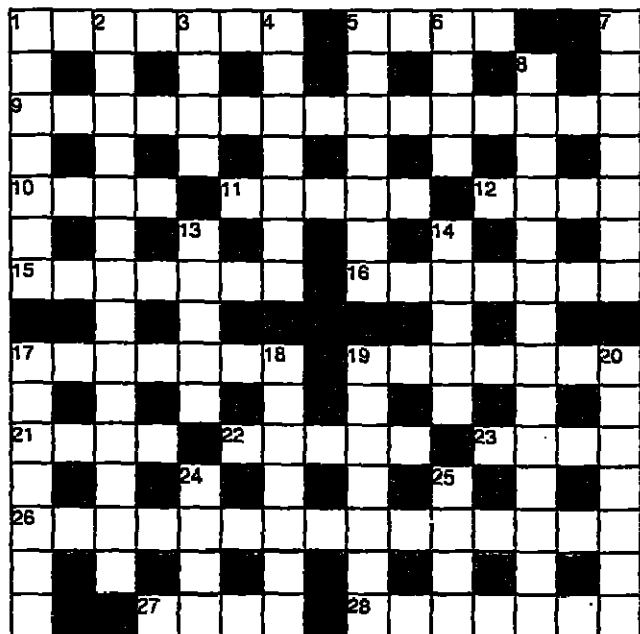
ACROSS

- 1 Calendar a Latin graduate can read back to front (7)
- 5 Manage to acquire a clerical cloak (4)
- 9 Indisposed to find where the forecast is (5,3,7)
- 10 Blast! There's a mend in the cloth (4)
- 11 Fish makes a monk sick (5)
- 12 Short distance from fashionable church (4)
- 15 Annoyed because officers went first (7)
- 16 Words added later transform religious manual (7)
- 17 Barge encircles steamer named "The Falcon" (7)
- 19 Frenchman and I tucked into meat from Flanders (7)
- 21 Vestment returned by archbishop of York (4)

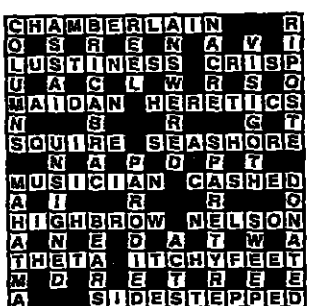
- 22 Reference some readers find extremely useful (5)
- 23 Opposed to displaying silver at home (4)
- 26 Leaving full-time education? Clearly not! (9,6)
- 27 Ship furnished with second rate equipment (4)
- 28 Paid for others to be given medication (7)

DOWN

- 1 A day the German went to pieces? (7)
- 2 Went one better and drew perfect circles (4,5,5)
- 3 Average number joining the Marines (4)
- 4 Placing female in mixed school was consistent (7)



SOLUTIONS



Yesterday's Quick Solution
ACROSS: 1 Pester, 2 Sighed, 7 Drivelled, 9 Lory, 10 Lion, 11 Maine, 13 Bonnet, 14 Emma, 15 School, 17 Bonnet, 19 Coyly, 20 Lint, 22 Oid, 23 Greengage, 24 Bun, 27 Tightly, 28 Foully.
DOWN: 1 Pedler, 2 Tory, 3 Revel, 4 Seilae, 5 Gael, 6 Dirndl, 7 Drenching, 8 Dismantle, 11 Medoc, 12 Enjoy, 15 Sellar, 16 Lovely, 17 Bright, 18 Tiddly, 21 Tread, 22 Oppa.

QUICK CROSSWORD

- ACROSS
- 1 Cooking slowly (8)
- 7 Wager (5)
- 8 Adora (9)
- 9 Chopping tool (3)
- 10 Cupola (4)
- 11 Egyptian peasant (6)
- 13 Various (6)
- 14 Two-headed muscle (6)
- 17 Recollection (6)
- 18 Maple (4)
- 20 Low (3)
- 22 Science of universe (9)
- 23 Unpleasant (5)
- 24 Relating to trees (8)

- DOWN
- 1 Procreate (5)
- 2 Egg-white (7)
- 3 Queen's Counsel (4)
- 4 Secured with brad (6)
- 5 Indian prince (5)
- 6 Retribution (7)
- 7 Sheepdog (7)
- 12 Pre-eminence (7)
- 13 Staying power (7)
- 15 Shut in (7)
- 16 Rubber (6)
- 17 Dampish (5)
- 19 Regal (5)
- 21 Lombardic lake (4)

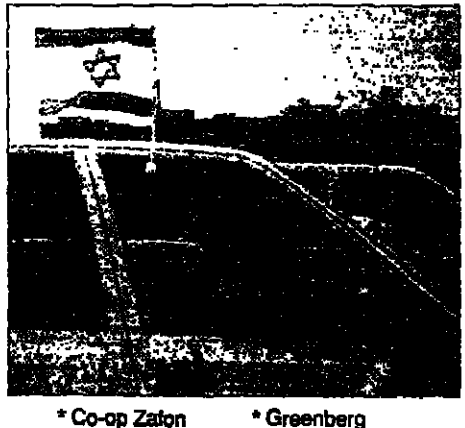
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Tel Aviv: Bass, 66 Fishman, 523-7326; Ben, 174 Dizengoff, 522-2388; Tibi 1 a.m. Friday: Jakobovits, 125 Ibn Givoli, 546-2049; 78 midnight: Superpharm Ramat Aviv, 40 Einstein, 641-3730; Superpharm London Ministere, 4 Shaul Hamelech, 696-0115.
Ra'anana-Kfar Sava: Hadar, 12 Habenim, Hod Hasharon, 740-1405.
Netanya: Hanel, 36 Weizman, 882-9389.
Haifa: Derech Hayam, 299 Derech Hayam, 837-1472.
Kiryat area: Deganya, 19 Bessel, Kiryat Haim, 841-2371.
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Saturday, April 18
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Netanya: Hadarim Mall, 2 Hacadar, 862-8436.
Haifa: Kikar Ziv, 1 Shalom Aleichem, 823-5064.
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Jerusalem Area

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Jerusalem Area

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IRAN

Continued from Page 1

The congressional statements followed a series of Jerusalem Post articles that quoted Iranian government documents as saying the Islamic republic obtained two nuclear weapons in January 1992 from the former Soviet Union. At the time, the memos said, the weapons were inoperable.

Rep. Jim Saxton and Rep. Bill McCollum told the Post they have taken seriously reports that Iran has achieved nuclear capability.

"I have followed this very closely over the years and only a fool would assume that Tehran has the best of intentions," said Saxton, a New Jersey Republican and chairman of the House Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare. "I believe that Iran already has nuclear weapons and that our policy should reflect that."

McCullum, a Florida Republican and a member of the House Select Committee on Intelligence, went further. A former member of the Terrorism Task Force, he said that the evidence acquired by the group "indicates that Iran possesses nuclear capability. For years, we have received reliable information that Iran has been obtaining nuclear weapons' parts and supplies from the former Soviet republics in Central Asia. Not only have we not dismissed these reports, but over these six years there has been a growing volume of supporting evidence."

Labor MK Rafi Eini, who obtained the Iranian government memorandums on the arrival of nuclear weapons to Tehran in Washington and relayed them to Israel, said the US and Israel have known of these documents since 1995.

For his part, McCollum said Tehran's policy suggests that it already has nuclear weapons and is now trying to acquire a delivery system to launch them.

"We have witnessed various activities in Iran - such as the acquisition of ballistic missiles and the establishment and exercising of a distinct national-level command and control system dedicated for the launching of strategic weapons - that reinforce the wealth of data on Iranian nuclear weapons acquisition," McCollum said. "Therefore, I believe that prudence dictates that US policy toward Tehran must be based on the fact that Iran has already crossed the nuclear threshold."

A US analyst with connections in the US intelligence community said he was told by senior intelligence officials they are convinced Tehran has a small-sized nuclear weapon - although Washington has been unable to locate it.

State of uncertainty

The steep devaluation of the shekel continues to make headlines. The press finds fault with the government and the Bank of Israel for their handling of the currency liberalization.

"There are a few good reasons to support the claim that the planned liberalization will end in national weeping," Yediot Aharanot's Gidon Eshet states, adding that by keeping the public in the dark about the plan's details, the government only encourages additional nervousness.

Ma'ariv's Moshe Perl claims that both the businessmen and the ordinary citizens do not trust the decisionmakers in Jerusalem and have no idea if they actually know what they are doing.

Yediot's Sever Plotzker offers more reassuring forecasts. He relies on models from different countries and concludes that the liberalization will cause Israelis to

abandon the view that the dollar is sacred and "the shekel will reign."

Hebron celebrations

Yuval Sherlo, writing in Ma'ariv, supports conducting jubilee celebrations in Hebron. He insists that the celebration is not a political manipulation but a great privilege for the state as the city is "the cradle of the Israeli kingdom of the days of the Bible."

"If the celebrations will lead the public to embrace Hebron as an integral part of the state and if Hebron's population will treat Israel and its establishments [with respect], it would be one of the most wonderful outcomes of the jubilee events," he writes.

Haim Hanegbi, also writing in Ma'ariv, disagrees. He refers to Sunday's celebrations marking 30 years since Rabbi Moshe Levinger established a settlement in Hebron and accuses the settlers of spreading hatred and of incitement. He

states that it is tragic "to watch an entire state being led by the nose of one man, Moshe Levinger, and to think that millions of people, Jews and Arabs alike, might pay the price of his hallucinations with their bodies and their souls."

Cutting slack

The press evaluated last week-end's positive articles and commentaries on Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In Yediot, Emuna Alon questions reporters' surprise at Netanyahu's successes. "Whoever undermines Netanyahu's basic ability to function as a good prime minister, undermines the majority of the Israeli public's ability to vote for a good prime minister," she writes, adding that if the majority voted for him, it must know the reason why.

Ha'aretz's Yoel Marcus says that Netanyahu's high opinion of himself helps him succeed in interviews.

RELEASED

Continued from Page 1

Katamesh's brother, Rebbi, was released a week ago and Palestinian sources said another two will be released within the next few days. All have pledged not to carry out or encourage violence against Israel - after years of refusal.

Television news broadcasts showed Katamesh taking the pledge of non-violence that reportedly had secured his release from Dammam prison in northern Israel.

"My colleagues and I will not undertake any acts that affect the security of the Israeli public, directly or indirectly," Katamesh was shown saying to military authorities.

Israeli security sources said such a pledge has symbolic importance as the Popular Front waged a campaign against the Israeli-Palestinian agreements. The group is not considered active as most of the violent opposition to Israel has been

assumed by Islamic militants. Katamesh initially refused to answer questions of reporters, saying he was tired. But hours later he held a news conference in Ramallah in which he vowed "that the struggle will continue until the end of the Israeli occupation."

Katamesh denied he was a member of the Popular Front and that he has reversed his opposition toward the Oslo Accords, but said he will now study the political situation.

More than 200 administrative detainees are still being held by Israel.

Jay Bushinsky adds: Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's communications director, David Bar-Ilan, said Katamesh and four other PFLP activists just released or due to be released "signed declarations that they will shun terrorism and will not resort to violence."

Bar-Ilan said they promised to continue their activity only on the political level. "This is a confidence-building measure as far as

we are concerned," he said. "We hope they will stick to their words."

Bar-Ilan said the PFLP cadres receive their orders from George Habash, who is abroad.

News agencies add: The Terror Victims Association headed by Meir Indor was enraged by Katamesh's release.

"The left-wing Jewish groups who energetically worked for his release will pay the bill for the attacks that Katamesh will carry out in the future," it said in a statement.

Left-wing and human-rights activists praised the government's decision to free Katamesh.

"The Israeli government has now seen the proof that administrative detention does not work," said Meretz MK Dedi Zucker. "This should open the doors for others."

Meanwhile, Hamas published a leaflet last night in Gaza claiming it does not trust the PA's investigation of the killing of Muhi Sharif. The group, however, is willing to participate in any probe conducted by an independent Arab committee.

INFLATION

Continued from Page 1

The shekel's depreciation this month came amid uncertainty over the nature, effect, and timetable of the government's currency liberalization package, which is officially scheduled to be launched on Independence Day.

Elsewhere, there were seasonal

reductions in prices of fruits and vegetables (-0.5%), as well as clothing and footwear (-2.8%).

The largest price rises last month were in education, culture, and entertainment (0.5%), followed by health (0.4%).

Critics of the Bank of Israel's low-inflation policy attacked the central bank following the release of the monthly inflation data.

"This is an index of social failure," said MK Maxim Levy (Geshet), who chairs the Knesset Labor and Social Affairs Committee and is a candidate in the upcoming elections for chairmanship of the Histadrut.

Manufacturers Association president Dan Propoy said that behind an admittedly positive CPI situation lurk less favorable data, which add up to a recession.

RELIGIOUS SERVICES

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Ottawa clinches playoff berth

MIAMI (AP) — Alexei Yashin and Andreas Dackell each had a goal and an assist as Ottawa clinched its second playoff berth in as many years with a 3-2 victory over Florida on Tuesday.

The Panthers scored a pair of goals in the last 3:24 to make it close, but could not get the tying goal.

Coyotes 2, Red Wings 1
Brad Isbister scored one goal and assisted on the second as host Phoenix came from behind to snap Detroit's six-game winning streak.

The Coyotes, who won their third in a row to open a four-point lead over Edmonton in the race for the sixth playoff spot in the Western Conference, may open the postseason against the Red Wings.

Detroit stayed two points behind the Dallas in the race for the Central Division title with two games remaining, and would be the

third seed if it failed to pass the Stars.

Capitals 3, Rangers 1
Andrei Nikolishin scored the winning goal with his nose, boosting host Washington's bid for home-ice advantage in the playoffs.

N.Y. Rangers 1 0 0-1
Washington 1 0 0-2
First Period—1. New York, Sundstrom 19 (Sundstrom, 1:22). 2. Washington, Bonds 49 (Korowatshuk, Nikolishin), 12:47. Second Period—None. Third Period—3. Washington, Nikolishin 6, 8:58 (pp.). 4. Washington, Janss 9 (Hussey, Baumgartner), 8:10 (pp.). Goals—New York, Olausen, Washington, Kozlov, A—19, 7-0.

Ottawa 2 1 0-3
Florida 0 0 0-2
First Period—1. Ottawa, Yashin 33 (Dackell), 1:22. 2. Ottawa, Zlotok 10 (McEachern), 15:03 (pp.). Second Period—3. Ottawa, Dackell 15 (Dackell, 4:18, Third Period—4. Florida, Kozlov 18 (Ovchinnikov, Yashin), 16:36 (pp.). 5. Florida, Moloney 15 (Whitney, Jovanovski), 18:38. Goals—Ottawa, Dackell, Yashin, Zlotok, A—14, 7-0.

Detroit 0 1 0-1
Phoenix 0 0 0-2
First Period—None. Second Period—1. Detroit, Kozlov 26 (Fedorov), 8:15. Third Period—2. Phoenix, Isbister 9 (Vanderstey, Hruska), 3:31. 3. Phoenix, Oram 5 (Fedorov, Janss), 14:52. Goals—Detroit, Olausen, Phoenix, Wale, A—16, 2-1.

EASTERN CONFERENCE						
Atlantic Division						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
N.Y. Rangers	47	22	10	104	218	159
Philadelphia	41	27	11	93	233	186
Washington	38	30	12	86	214	177
N.Y. Islanders	28	40	11	67	204	228
N.Y. Flyers	23	39	10	64	191	228
Florida	24	42	14	62	196	247
Tampa Bay	17	53	9	43	146	254
Northeast Division						
Pittsburgh	37	24	18	92	214	184
N.J. Devils	36	27	16	88	203	187
N.J. Nets	37	29	13	87	211	186
N.H. Bruins	34	31	12	84	228	199
N.H. Stars	33	32	13	81	191	197
Ottawa	33	38	8	74	195	209
Carolina						

WESTERN CONFERENCE						
Central Division						
	W	L	T	Pts	GF	GA
x-Dallas	47	21	11	105	234	162
x-Denver	44	21	13	103	246	189
x-St. Louis	42	29	8	92	239	194
x-Phoenix	34	32	10	77	228	199
Chicago	30	37	12	72	188	192
Toronto	28	42	9	65	186	230

N.H. Bruins clinched playoff berth
N.H. Bruins clinched division title
N.H. Bruins clinched conference title

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RADIO

■ **VOICE OF MUSIC**

8:05 Pachelbel: Suite in G major (Musica Antiqua Köln); Corelli: Concerto Grosso in G major (English Concert / Pinnochio); Handel: Harp Concerto (Midlandian European Soloists / Handelli); Basso: Sonata in G major (Ma / Cooper)
 7:07 Haydn: Violin Concerto in G major (Zelichman / List / Co.)
 8:01 Rolli: Clementi: Piano Sonata in B flat major (Demidenko); Mozart: String Quartet K173 (Pro Arte Salzburg)
 8:55 Beethoven: Piano Quartet op 16 (Schiff / Keller); Brahms: Trio for Clarinet, Cello and Piano op 114 (Evans / Bergman / Volkov)
 9:05 Weill: The Threeppenny Opera (Lerny and other soloists / Berlin Radio Orchestra / Brudner-Ruggenberg); Newman: From The Opus Weill; The Seven Deadly Sins
 12:00 Noon with Gideon Hood
 14:00 Encore
 15:00 Israeli Composers with Israeli Orchestras
 15:00 Ancient Finnish Songs: Bach: Suite no 4 for Solo Cello; Mendelssohn: Piano Quartet op 3 (Domus); Taverner: The Hidden Treasure for String Quartet (Chilfingian); Widor: 3 Motets
 16:00 Westminster Cathedral Choir (O'Donnell)
 18:00 Walter: Sonata in A major for Violin and Piano (Lerny); Dury: Mahler: Symphony no 4 (Rueterko / Birmingham SO / Rattle)
 19:05 The Israel Quartet / Gerald Mishon, piano + 3
 20:00 The String Quartet no 2; Haydn: Piano Sonata no 32 with 6 piano; Mozart: String Quartet no 20 in D major
 21:00 Clouds, Celebrations and Sirens
 23:00 Art of the Song

HIDDEN

Continued from Page 16

On his return to Dublin, his key contact on the route to O'Dowd was the US ambassador there — Jean Kennedy-Smith, no less. The chain of information was well in place when the long-promised US envoy, ex-Senator George Mitchell, moved in and moved the game from the wings to center stage.

It is not surprising that the pro-British Unionist side in Northern Ireland seems to be a bit stunned and on the defensive in trying to sell the peace accords to its followers. The unmistakable stamp of some brilliant Irish and Irish-American diplomacy lies upon the agreement, and even the British seem lost in admiration — though Blair too deserves great credit.

"This time," says O'Dowd, "this time, Irish America delivered the president of the United States, and through him the talks chairman George Mitchell. Constitutional nationalism delivered the legislative framework, a superb set of negotiating officials and leaders like [Irish Prime Minister] Bertie Ahern and [northern Irish nationalist leader] John Hume at the most crucial time. Irish republicanism delivered two IRA cease-fires and leaders of the caliber of Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness with the ability to bring their movement with them."

However, he cautions, "they could fail, like [other great Irishmen] faced failure before them, not through any fault of their own, but because forces conspired to bring down a settlement."

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— the Hamasniks of Ireland — against the peace process. The slipper y slope was tiding dangerously downwards at an alarming rate.

Irish police on April 2 intercepted a huge car bomb on a Dublin ship bound for England — probably for a massacre of innocents at the annual Grand National race meeting.

It was a close run thing — by a miracle Ireland and England escaped an outbreak of bombing attacks like those in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, aimed to bury the peace process. The shadowy merchants of death did not halt the agreement the world has hailed as a stunning victory. There's a long way to go.

This is the last of three columns.

tions forward. In this his current

ACTS

Continued from Page 5

"You're outside," said his source. "Inside, it's like listening to paint dry."

It is surprising to recall now that the talks have been in session for two years — a lot of paint has dried. They started off with a blazing row over the nomination of former US Senate majority leader George Mitchell as chairman.

He is a horse from the Kennedy stables, fumed the Unionists, already enraged that Britain had abandoned its historic view of Northern Ireland as a domestic issue, where no foreigners — partic-

HIDDEN

Continued from Page 16

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Inside

Three for McGwire

Page 21

Sports Editors
Joe Hoffman & Ori Lewis

Jerusalem, Eilat up 2-1 in hoops playoff

by ARYEH DEAN COHEN

Remember Adi Gordon? Hapoel Jerusalem's captain, who's had more downs than ups this season, rediscovered his outside shot at Mafra last night, leading his club to a 68-60 victory and a 2-1 lead in their best-of-five National Basketball League quarterfinal playoff series.

Elsewhere, Hapoel Eilat edged Maccabi Rishon LeZion 74-72 at home to take a 2-1 lead in their series, while Maccabi Tel Aviv eliminated Maccabi Ramat Gan 3-0, with a 98-88 home victory, and Maccabi Ra'anana did the same to Bnei Herzliya, 95-76.

Jerusalem 68, Galil Elyon 60. Gordon scored 21 points, had a slew of assists, hit several long three-pointers, and played fine defense. He keyed a 7-0 second half spurt that propelled Jerusalem to a 44-35 lead that proved insurmountable.

The series continue Sunday in the north and at Rishon.

Israel's Fed Cup results

The national women's tennis team lost to Belarus 2-1 yesterday in their second match in the Federation Cup in La Manga, Spain. On Tuesday, Israel went down 2-1 to Greece.

Hila Rosen and Anna Smashnova lost in singles play. In the doubles, Rosen and Tzippi Obziler beat Nadejda Ostrovskaya and Tatiana Poutchek 6-3, 6-1.

Heather Chait

SCOREBOARD

European Cup semifinals (second leg): Monaco 3, Juventus 2. Juventus advances 4-4 on aggregate. Borussia Dortmund 0, Real Madrid 0. Madrid advance 2-0 on aggregate.

Revivo's late score wins for Israel

82nd-minute strike lifts hosts past Argentina, 2-1, in soccer friendly

By ORI LEWIS

(REUTERS) Haim Revivo scored a stunning winner from a free kick in the 82nd minute to give hosts Israel, playing with 10 men, a deserved 2-1 win over Argentina in a friendly yesterday. The unimpressive Argentines appeared nervous at the start of the match as the two-time World Cup winners began their preparations for France '98.

Israel could have taken the lead in the 17th minute when Cypriot referee Costas Kapitanis awarded a dubious spot-kick after Revivo appeared to fall in the area.

Striker Alon Mizrahi's penalty hit the crossbar and Revivo's effort to head the ball from the rebound went over the bar.

Israel opened the scoring in the 64th minute when Najwan Grayev drilled an 18-meter drive into the net from directly in front of goal.

Israel did not panic despite being reduced to 10 men a minute later when Yossi Abuksis was sent off for a second bookable offense. But the Argentines managed to equalize in the 76th minute when Israel keeper Rafi Cohen fumbled a glancing header from Diego Cagna over the line.

Revivo's stunning winner came eight minutes from the end.

Just when it appeared as if Israel would be prepared to settle for the draw, Revivo fired a low thunderous free kick from 25 meters out on the left.

Argentine goalkeeper German Burgos was expecting the Celta Vigo player to cross to his teammates who had all converged on the right side of the goal.

Israel coach Shlomo Scharf was ecstatic at Revivo's performance. "If Revivo had been a South American, he would be worth \$30 million," the coach told reporters.

"We seem to find it easier to play well against the more technical South American sides than we do against the powerful Europeans," Scharf said.

"This is an historic win. It will take time to sink in, but I would gladly swap it for a draw in Vienna (against Austria in the upcoming European championship qualifiers)," he added.

Argentine coach Daniel Passarella said he was not surprised by the result. "Israel looked like a good side... (and) as for my team, they failed to play both as a group and as individuals."



THREE ON ONE - Israel defenders Amir Shelah (1) Jan Talasnikov (7) and Arik Benado (5) close in on Argentina's Gabriel Batistuta.

(Brian Henschel)

Grayev, Amir Shelah, Arik Benado, Ran Ben-Shimon, Jan Talasnikov, Haim Revivo, Eyal Berkovic (Walid Badir 69), Yossi Abuksis, Alon Mizrahi (Ronen Harazi 45). ARGENTINA: German Burgos, Roberto Sensini, Mauricio Pineda, Gustavo Lombardi (Sergio Berti 69), Matias Almeyda, Pablo Paz, Diego Cagna, Gabriel Batistuta, Claudio Lopez, Marcelo Galarza, Rodolfo Cardoso (Arnaldo Ortega 45).

Spiegler chosen best of last 50 years. Mordechai Spiegler was yesterday named as Israel's best player since the creation of the State 50 years ago, according to a reader's poll in *Yedioth Aharonot*.

Spiegler was Israel's dominant strike force in the late 1960s and '70s. He led Israel to its only World Cup finals in Mexico in 1970 and is the highest goalscorer among all Israeli players, with 32 goals in 82 appearances.

He played mainly for Maccabi Netanya and with Olympique Marseille in the French first division. Following Spiegler in the voting were strikers Eli Ohana, Nahum Stelmach and Yehoshua Glazer and goalkeeper Ya'acov Hodolov.

All matches on Saturday at 16:30 unless stated: Maccabi Petah Tikva

v. Hapoel Kfar Sava; Hapoel Be'er Sheva v. Ironi Ashdod, tomorrow 16:30; Bnei Yehuda v. Maccabi Tel Aviv, Haskva Quarter 17:00; Maccabi Haifa v. Be'er Jerusalem, Kiryat Eliezer 17:15.

Also, Hapoel Jerusalem v. Hapoel Haifa, Teddy Stadium tomorrow 16:30; Hapoel Tel Aviv v. Ironi Rishon, Bloomfield; Maccabi Herzliya v. Hapoel Beersheba, Herzliya 17:00; Hapoel Ashkelon v. Hapoel Petah Tikva, Ashkelon tomorrow 16:00.

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